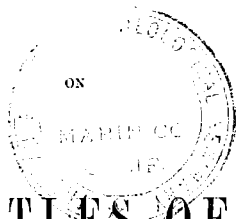
LECTURES



ON

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

TO THE

THESSALONIANS.

BY

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In these Lectures an attempt has been made to apply the results of a critical study of the Greek text to the uses of popular instruction, and the edification of the Church. They are now printed very nearly as they were delivered during the past year in a regular course of pulpit exposition.

Of the many books consulted in their preparation a few only are named in the Notes. A full list would embrace, it is believed, almost every thing of interest or value on these Epistles.

Of the Translation of the Epistles, prefixed to the Lectures, it is enough to say, that it makes no pretension whatever to superiority in elegance, or in adaptation to popular reading. It is here inserted chiefly for the sake of bringing together the various modifications of the common version, that are embodied in the exposition.

A free use has been made throughout of the work referred to on p. xi.

It may also be mentioned, as accounting for some slight defect in the arrangement of the introductory matter, that considerable progress had been made in printing the Lectures on the First Epistle, before it was determined to add those on the Second.

INTRODUCTION.

THESSALONICA, now Saloniki, appears to have been, from the earliest period of its history, a place of interest and importance. Situated on the great thoroughfare of empire[1] that connected Rome with her eastern dependencies, and at the north-western head of the Ægean, or Grecian Archipelago, it soon acquired, what it has ever since retained, high rank as a commercial emporium. In the apostolic age it flourished as the acknowledged metropolis of the province of Macedonia; and it is said to be even now the second city of European Turkey, having a population of some 70,000 inhabitants, of whom nearly one half are Jews. It is not at all strange, therefore, that in the 'manifold wisdom of God,' which so directly guided and controlled the first planting of the Church in the wilds of heathenism, Thessalonica should have been selected as one of the primary centres of Christianity.

About the year 51, Paul attended by Silas, and per-

[1] *Via Egnatia.*

haps also by Timothy,[1] reached this city, in the course of his second missionary journey. In Philippi, where he had last laboured, and which lay a hundred miles to the north-east, he had been honoured as the instrument of founding the second, if not the very first,[2] church of our Lord in Europe—a church ever afterward peculiarly attached to the Apostle, and very dear to him, as we learn from that most affectionate Epistle which he addressed to it some ten years later, when a prisoner at Rome. His ministry in that place had, indeed, been brought to a sudden and violent end by an outburst of Gentile animosity, aroused by the crafty and malignant representations of an offended and resentful avarice. But, so far was the zeal of the preacher from being at all abated by this recent experience of shame and suffering for Christ's sake and the gospel's, that he no sooner arrived at Thessalonica, the capital, and seat of the proconsul, 'where was a synagogue,'—or rather, '*the* synagogue;'[3] the chief, if not the only, synagogue—'of the Jews' in those parts, than 'Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening

[1] As some infer from a comparison of Acts 16 : 3, 12, &c.; 17 : 4, 14; Phil. 2 : 22; 1 Thess. 1 : 1; 2 Thess. 1 : 1; 1 Thess. 3 : 1–6. It is observable, however, that in the account of Paul's visit to Thessalonica (Acts 17 : 1–10) there is no mention of Timothy. He may have been left behind at Philippi, as he afterward was at Berea.

[2] The church at Rome may have been earlier; but of this there is no historical evidence.

[3] Acts 17 : 1 (ἡ συναγωγή).

and alleging, that the Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this is the Christ Jesus whom I preach unto you."[1] Paul's own statement, as given in the second chapter of the Epistle now before us, is still more significant as regards the spirit and power of these scriptural demonstrations: 'For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: but even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.'

Forbearing further remarks at present on the nature and scope of the Apostle's personal labours at Thessalonica, as these are illustrated by numerous allusions in both Epistles, let us here simply remark that the immediate result of all was even more striking than at Philippi. 'Some of them'—of the Jews—'believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks'—Gentiles who, believing in the God of Israel, frequented the synagogue for the purposes of worship—'a great multitude, and of the chief women'—Jewish and Gentile alike—'not a few.'

But neither was this large success the only result. This success was itself, as in so many other instances, the occasion and signal for a renewal of persecution, and in this case at the instigation of Jewish envy and jealousy. Leaving Thessalonica, therefore, under cover

[1] According to the better construction of Acts 17: 3.

of night, Paul and Silas proceed to Berea, another Macedonian city, not far to the south-west. There a fresh triumph awaited them, or rather the gospel which they published; and there too their evangelical toil was again interrupted by the relentless rancour of the Thessalonian Jews. Silas and Timothy, indeed,—the latter of whom reappears at this point of the narrative,—remained still in the place; though, whether for the sake of confirming and comforting the recent converts, or merely from stress of circumstances, or in order to facilitate the escape of their great leader, cannot be certainly determined. Paul himself seems at once to have made for the neighbouring coast, and, finding there a convenient opportunity, to have gone by sea to Athens. The Berean escort, which had accompanied him as far as this renowned metropolis of Greek civilization, there left him on their return, bearing with them a commandment to Silas and Timothy to rejoin the Apostle as soon as possible. With this injunction it has been inferred by some from ch. 3 : 1, 2, that Timothy at least succeeded in complying, while Paul was still at Athens; and that from Athens he was despatched again to Thessalonica on his mission of ministerial solicitude and love. But whether this were so or not, Acts 18 : 5 shows clearly that it was not until Paul reached Corinth, where he continued at least eighteen months, that he received from Timothy, on the accomplishment of that mission, the longed-for intelligence respecting his beloved Thessalonians. And,

as it is further obvious (ch. 3 : 6) that this immediately preceded the writing of this First Epistle, we may safely conclude that it was written about the year 52, from Corinth, and not, as asserted in the subscription, from Athens.

Of the genuineness and authenticity of the Epistle there has never existed so much as a doubt in the Church of God. Even the arrogant and reckless criticism of modern times is not, in general, indisposed—it is at any rate compelled—to make concessions in its favour. Happily, therefore, we may at once address ourselves to the reverent, and earnest, and loving study of it, without any misgivings on that score. But let it not be without at the same time united, fervent, persevering prayer for the gracious aids of that good Spirit who helpeth our infirmities—leading us, in our great weakness and blindness, into all truth, and alone rendering even the truth effectual for our spiritual quickening, and holiness, and joy.

THE EPISTLE

TRANSLATED.[1]

I. PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks to God always for you all, mak- 2
ing mention of you in our prayers; remembering 3
without ceasing your work of faith, and toil of love, and patience of hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father; knowing, brethren 4
beloved by God, your election; because our gospel 5
came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were found among you for your sakes; and ye became imi- 6
tators of us and of the Lord, having accepted the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit;

[1] This translation is nearly the same as that given in the Author's critical work on the Thessalonian Epistles, published by the American Bible Union in 1856.

7 so that ye became patterns to all that believe in
8 Macedonia and Achaia. For from you hath been sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God hath gone forth, so that we have
9 no need to speak any thing. For they themselves declare concerning us what sort of entrance we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from the idols, to
10 serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from the heavens, Jesus, who delivereth us from the coming wrath.

II. For ye yourselves know, brethren, our entrance
2 unto you, that it was not vain; but having suffered before and been shamefully treated, as ye know, in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you
3 the gospel of God in much contention. For our exhortation *is* not of delusion, nor of uncleanness, nor in
4 guile; but as we have been approved by God to be intrusted with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, who proveth our hearts.
5 For neither at any time used we words of flattery, as ye know; nor a cloak of covetousness, God *is* wit-
6 ness; nor sought we of men glory, neither from you nor from others, when we might have been burdensome,
7 as Christ's apostles; but we were found gentle in the midst of you, as a nurse would cherish her own chil-
8 dren. Thus, yearning after you, we were willing to impart unto you not only the gospel of God, but also

our own souls, because ye had become dear unto us.
For ye remember, brethren, our toil and weariness; 9
for working night and day, that we might not burden
any one of you, we proclaimed unto you the gospel
of God. Ye *are* witnesses, and God, how holily, and 10
righteously, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves
for you who believed; even as ye know how, as a 11
father his own children, we exhorted you, each one
of you, and encouraged, and adjured, that ye should 12
walk worthily of God, who calleth you into His own
kingdom and glory. Therefore we, also, give thanks 13
to God without ceasing, because, when ye received
the word of God heard from us, ye accepted, not
men's word, but, as it is in truth, God's word, which
also worketh in you that believe. For ye, brethren, 14
became imitators of the churches of God which are in
Judea in Christ Jesus; for ye also suffered the same
things from your own countrymen, even as they from
the Jews; who also killed Jesus the Lord and their 15
own prophets, and drove us out, and they please not
God, and *are* contrary to all men, hindering us to 16
speak to the Gentiles, that they may be saved, to fill
up their sins always: but the wrath is come upon
them to *make* an end.

But we, brethren, having been bereaved of you 17
for a short time, in presence, not in heart, the more
abundantly endeavoured to see your face, with great
desire. Wherefore we wished to come unto you, 18

even I Paul, both once and again ; and Satan thwarted
19 us. For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of glory-
ing? Or *are* not ye also, before our Lord Jesus
20 Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.

III. Wherefore, being no longer able to endure, we
1 thought good to be left in Athens alone, and sent
Timothy our brother, and minister of God, and our
fellow-labourer, in the gospel of Christ, to establish you,
2 and to exhort you concerning your faith, that no one
should be moved in these afflictions; for ye your-
3 selves know that unto this we are appointed. For,
indeed, when we were with you, we foretold you that
we are to be afflicted ; as also it came to pass, and ye
4 know. Therefore, I also being no longer able to
endure sent to know your faith, lest perhaps the
tempter had tempted you, and our toil should prove
5 in vain. But, Timothy having just now come to
us from you, and brought us good tidings of your
faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance
of us always, earnestly desiring to see us, even as we
6 also *to see* you, therefore we were comforted, brethren,
on your account, in all our affliction and distress, by
7 your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the
8 Lord. For what thanks can we render to God con-
cerning you, for all the joy wherewith we rejoice for
9 your sakes before our God ; night and day praying
very exceedingly that we may see your face, and
10 make up the deficiencies of your faith. But may our
God and Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself

direct our way unto you: and you, may the Lord 12
make to increase and abound in love toward one
another, and toward all, even as we also toward you;
to the establishing your hearts unblameable in holiness 13
before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord
Jesus Christ with all His holy ones.

IV. Finally therefore, brethren, we beseech you,
and exhort in the Lord Jesus, that, according as ye re-
ceived from us how ye ought to walk and please God,
ye would abound yet more. For ye know what com- 2
mands we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is 3
God's will, your sanctification; that ye abstain from for-
nication; that every one of you know how to pos- 4
sess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and
honour, not in passion of lust, even as the Gentiles, 5
who know not God; that no one transgress and defraud 6
in the matter his brother: because the Lord *is* an
avenger for all these things, as we also foretold you and
fully testified. For God did not call us for uncleanness, 7
but in sanctification. Therefore, he that rejecteth, re- 8
jecteth not man, but God, who also gave His Holy
Spirit unto us.

But, concerning brotherly love ye have no need 9
that *one* write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of
God to love one another; for ye also do it toward all 10
the brethren that are in the whole of Macedonia: but
we exhort you, brethren, to abound yet more, and to 11
study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to

work with your own hands, as we commanded you;
12 that ye may walk becomingly toward those without,
and may have need of nothing.

13 But I would not that ye should be ignorant,
brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that ye may
not sorrow, even as the others who have no hope.
14 For if we believe that Jesus died and arose, so also,
those who fell asleep, will God through Jesus bring
15 with Him. For this we say unto you in the word of
the Lord, that we who are living, who are being left
over unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise pre-
16 cede those who fell asleep. For the Lord Himself
with a shout, with voice of archangel, and with trumpet
of God, shall descend from heaven, and the dead in
17 Christ shall arise first; then we who are living, who are
being left over, shall together with them be caught
away in clouds, to meet the Lord, into the air; and so
18 shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one
another with these words.

V. But concerning the times and the seasons,
brethren, ye have no need that one write unto you:
2 for ye yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the
3 Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when
they are saying: 'Peace and safety!' then sudden
destruction cometh upon them, even as travail upon her
that is with child, and they shall in no wise escape.
4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day
5 should overtake you as a thief: for all ye are sons of

light, and sons of day. We are not of night, nor of darkness : so then, let us not sleep even as the others ; 6
but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep 7
sleep by night ; and they that are drunken are drunk by night. But we being of day, let us be sober, having 8
put on the breastplate of faith and love, and, *for* helmet, the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us 9
to wrath, but to the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we 10
are watching or sleeping, we should live together with Him. Wherefore comfort one another, and edify one 11
the other, as also ye do.

But we beseech you, brethren, to know those who 12
toil among you, and preside over you in the Lord, and admonish you ; and to esteem them very exceedingly in 13
love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. But we exhort you, brethren, admonish the 14
disorderly, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all. See that none ren- 15
der evil for evil unto any one ; but always pursue that which is good, both toward one another, and toward all. Always rejoice. Unceasingly pray. In every 16 17
thing give thanks : for this *is* God's will in Christ Jesus 18
concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not 19 20
prophesyings. Prove all things ; hold fast that which 21
is good. Abstain from every form of evil. But may 22 23
the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly ; and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept

blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
24 Faithful *is* He that calleth you; who also will perform.

25 Brethren, pray for us. Salute all the brethren with
26 a holy kiss. I adjure you, by the Lord, that the epis-
27 tle be read unto all the holy brethren. The grace of
28 our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

The first to the Thessalonians was written from Athens.

LECTURES

ON

FIRST THESSALONIANS.

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THE Epistle readily divides itself into two portions. In the first of these, comprising the first three chapters, the writer, after the customary solemn benediction, reviews the past history and present condition of the church at Thessalonica, and his own personal and ministerial relations to it. He at the same time pours forth the emotions of joy, gratitude, and longing affection, which every such remembrance awakened, and which were now especially stirred within him by the favourable report just received from Timothy. Again and again he declares his earnest desire to revisit the church, and he renews his prayer to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, that this desire of his heart may be fulfilled. Meanwhile, he commends his brethren to the Lord's all-sufficient grace; and then in the second division, which includes the two remaining chapters, he delivers sundry instructions and exhortations.

LECTURE I.

I. THESS. 1 : 1. — 'Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father, and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.'

'*Paul.*' Here, as in all his other epistles, the writer takes his Gentile name; though *why* Saul of Tarsus 'is also called Paul,' has been accounted for in various ways—most of them rather fanciful than satisfactory. It is sufficient for us to know, that it was quite a common thing for Jews at this period to have a second name, Greek or Roman, along with their proper Hebrew one; and that the only peculiarity of the present case is the suddenness, with which the evangelical history exchanges the exclusive use of the Hebrew name for the equally exclusive use of the Gentile one. By looking into the 13th chapter of the Acts, you will find that the transition occurs very near the beginning of Paul's first great preaching tour, when he appears for the first time to have assumed his independent position as the Apostle of the Gentiles, and in close connection with the conversion to the faith, at Paphos in the island of Cyprus, of the Roman deputy or procon-

sul, Sergius Paulus—a fact, it must be confessed, involving at least a curious coincidence, but probably nothing more.

'*And Silvanus, and Timotheus.*' According to his manner, Paul associates with himself in the salutation the companions and fellow-labourers that were with him at the time. Of the two here mentioned, Silvanus—or, as he is always called in the Acts, Silas—is put first, no doubt as being the older in years and in the ministry. He was one of the two 'prophets'—'chief men among the brethren'—that were chosen by the 'apostles and elders, with the whole church,' to accompany Paul and Barnabas on their return from Jerusalem to Antioch, bearing with them the decree of the Council—that consolatory charter of Gentile freedom. And not long afterward, on occasion of the rupture between Paul and Barnabas, the former selected Silas to attend him on his second mission.[1]

It was during the course of the same journey that, coming again to Lystra in Lycaonia, the Apostle there secured the companionship also of Timotheus, or Timothy, a native, as is supposed, of that region, and 'the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek.'[2] Religiously educated from his earliest years, this young man seems to have been brought to the faith of Christ, and perhaps ordained to the gospel ministry, by Paul himself on his former visit; and now he found himself admitted to the

[1] Acts 15 : 22–40. [2] Acts 16 : 1.

closest personal and official intimacy, and was henceforth honoured with the truly parental confidence and love of the great Apostle.

'*Unto the church of the Thessalonians* which is *in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.*'

The letter is addressed to '*the church*'—the society—the organized community of believers at Thessalonica. *Called out*, as the Greek word denotes, from the surrounding mass, whether of unbelieving Jews or of heathen idolaters, and quickened individually with a new life, they were, as a church, incorporate one with another, set apart and furnished for holy service, and consecrated to a glorious destiny.

All which is yet more clearly taught us, when the church is said to be '*in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*' She is thus distinguished essentially, not only from 'the whole world lying in wickedness'—or, *in the wicked one*[1]—but from every merely human association or confederacy, however commendable its object, and however ingenious the machinery, and formidable the resources, by which it seeks to accomplish that object. The universe, indeed, must be said to 'live, and move, and have its being in' God,[2] as the Creator and Upholder of all. But the indwelling of the Church implies a still deeper and securer union—a freer, more enlarged, and more gracious fellowship. Coming in from the wilderness, and passing through all

[1] 1 John 5 : 19 (ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ.) [2] Acts 17 : 28.

the outer courts of the temple, behold her, no longer a transient and trembling worshipper, but a welcome and triumphing inmate, forever domesticated and enthroned in the holiest of all. She 'dwelleth in God and God in' her.[1] She is '*in God*,' as not merely the ground of her existence, but as her fortress and high tower, and her eternal home.

In like manner, God is 'the Father of spirits'—'the God of the spirits of all flesh,' who 'are also His offspring.'[2] But here again the language of natural piety acquires in the Church a far profounder significance, and richer, tenderer associations. There the fatherly aspect of God toward the creature is seen to be but the reflection of His fatherhood to the Eternal Son—the Only-Begotten—the Son of His love—who 'was in the beginning with God,' 'as one brought up with Him, and was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.'[3] And there too, and only there, breathes 'the Spirit of adoption,' whereby the Church has been created anew—begotten again—and is daily taught to 'cry, Abba, Father,' and receives 'the earnest of her inheritance.' That Spirit 'proceedeth from the Father' and the Son—from the Father through the Son.[4]

And accordingly you will observe here, that the Church is '*in God the Father*,' only as she is 'in *the Lord Jesus Christ*.' Deism is not Christianity, any more than Polytheism is. Or rather, the only true Deism is

[1] 1 John 4: 16. [2] Heb. 12: 9; Num. 16: 22; Act 17: 28.
[3] John 1: 2; Prov. 8: 30. [4] Rom. 8: 15; Eph. 1: 14; John 15: 26.

Christianity. There is no saving knowledge of Him who is 'the only true God,' where 'Jesus Christ whom He hath sent' is unknown.[1] This we hold for a first principle; and in the enforcement of it our Lord and His Apostles were ever most earnest and peremptory. Said the former: 'It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' And again: 'No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. . . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.'[2] To these teachings of the Master His followers humbly yielded themselves with the full assurance of faith, and with a gratitude inspired by their own experience of their truth. 'No man,' says John, in eager confirmation of the testimony of the forerunner, 'no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.' And hence also in his Epistles: 'Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. . . . Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.'[3]

Would any of you, then, look upon the fair 'light of the knowledge of the glory of God,' so as to be at once sanctified and blessed thereby? We bid you behold it

[1] John 17 : 3. [2] John 6 : 45; 14 : 6–9.
[3] John 1 : 18; 1 John 2 : 23; 2 John 9.

'in the face of Jesus Christ.' Thence it 'shines in the heart' of the Church.[1] For 'God' Himself is 'in Christ.' In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."[2]

Only be careful to remember, that the Church's knowledge of Christ is very far from being merely such a knowledge as we have of other teachers and benefactors of the race, as Socrates or Washington. This knowledge springs from vital union with its object—from participation of the very life of Christ. 'Christ liveth in' the Church, and for her 'to live is Christ."[3] And this just because she is *in* Him, as the branch is in the vine, or as the head and members of the body have but one life. 'We know that the Son of God is come'—such is the glad confession of all true believers—'and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ;'[4]—in Him as '*the Lord*,' the Lord of all, our rightful Owner and Ruler; in Him as '*Jesus*' the Saviour, our Saviour; in Him as the '*Christ*' of God, the Lord's Anointed, who thus makes us partakers of His own anointing.

I acknowledge, dear brethren, that what I have been saying has little in it that the mere natural reason can apprehend. It is, in truth, that 'great mystery'—so Paul calls it—of 'Christ and the Church,"[5] which is revealed only to the faith and consciousness of the Church herself. Nay, the utmost that even the Church

[1] 2 Cor. 4 : 6. [2] 2 Cor. 5 : 19; Col. 2 : 9.
[3] Gal. 2 : 20; Phil. 1 : 21. [4] 1 John 5 : 20. [5] Eph. 5 : 32.

now realizes of it in her own experience is but the faint dawning of that glory, for which her Lord, while yet He stood within the shadow of the cross, prayed the Father: 'That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us . . . that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.'[1]

Into this high 'fellowship,' then, 'with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ,'[2] the church of the Thessalonians had been called. There Paul now sees her standing, and at once salutes her with the benediction of apostolic faith and love:—

'*Grace* be *unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*'[3]

This, you perceive, is just a prayer that the church may live in the enjoyment of the peculiar privileges belonging to her peculiar relations, as these have already been considered by us; even of 'all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.'[4]

'*Grace and peace;*'—*grace*, free, unmerited favour; *peace*, the fine, oriental synonym for happiness;—*grace*, in all its workings and manifestations, as quickening grace, sanctifying grace, sustaining grace, restoring grace, comforting grace; *peace*, in all its forms, as peace

[1] John 17 : 21–23. [2] 1 John 1 : 3.

[3] All after the word '*peace*' is bracketed by Lachmann, and omitted by Tischendorf and Alford. [4] Eph. 1 : 3.

with God, peace of conscience, peace one with another, peace, so far as it might be for God's glory and their own good, with the world around, or, if that were impossible, then peace in the midst of the world's alarms and fiercest assaults;—*grace*, the cause; *peace*, the effect;—*grace*, the perennial fountain; *peace*, 'the river of God, which is full of water.'[1]

For observe, in the last place, whence flow these waters of life, and by what channel they reach the far-off wilderness, for the refreshing of the Church sojourning there. '*Grace* be *unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*' I spoke just now of '*grace*' as the fountain of '*peace.*' And, behold, that fountain is none other than the unfathomable heart of God. 'God is love,' and 'His tender mercies are over all His works.' 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' 'Your Father which is in heaven,' said our Lord to His disciples, 'maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'[2] What, then, must be His grace for the members of His own household! Them He hath 'loved with an everlasting love.' He loved them when they 'were enemies;' how much more, now that, through the renewing of the Holy Ghost, they are become His 'sons and daughters,' their hearts ever swelling with all filial emotions of love, joy, confidence,

[1] Ps. 56 · 9. [2] 1 John 4 : 8; Ps. 145 : 9; James 1 : 17; Matt. 5 : 45.

and hope, as they come into His presence, and say, *Our Father!* 'Of his own will begat He them with the word of truth, that they should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures;'[1] and will He now 'forsake the works of His own hands?' No; His 'mercy endureth for ever,' and, by the unfailing supply and mighty operation of His grace, He 'will perfect that which concerneth' them.[2] For 'if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?'[3] Abundant reason has the Church in her own experience, as well as in the exceeding great and precious promises of the word, to sing throughout all her generations: 'The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.'[4]

And accordingly the apostolic salutation invokes upon the church of the Thessalonians not only '*grace*,' but '*peace*' also, '*from God our Father*.' If one name by which He is known among His children is 'the God of all grace,'[5] another, no less dear, is that of 'the God of peace.'[6] He is their reconciling God. He 'hath called them to peace'—called them 'in one body,' for the very end that 'the peace of God might rule in their hearts.' An amazing word! 'The peace of God'

[1] Jer. 31 : 3; Rom. 5 : 10; 2 Cor. 6 : 18; James 1 : 18.
[2] Ps. 138 : 8. [3] Matt. 7 : 11. [4] Ps. 84 : 11. [5] 1 Pet. 5 : 10.
[6] Rom 15 : 33.

in the heart of man—'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,'[1] in the feeble, fearful, troubled heart of man!

Blessed be God, the wonder need not stagger our faith, when we find the Apostle adding: '*and* from *the Lord Jesus Christ.*' For what will God grudge to give, when He 'spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all' to the humiliation of the flesh, the contradiction of sinners, the buffetings of Satan, and the bitter and shameful death of the cross? Yes, '*the Lord Jesus Christ*' is himself the great, the 'the unspeakable gift'[2] of God—the one gift, in which all other gifts are included. 'For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell'—the fulness of grace—the fulness of peace—and from Him, as from the infinite, distributing Reservoir of the Godhead, be derived to us. Hence the prompt, thankful, unanimous acknowledgment and boast of all the redeemed: 'And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.'[3]

Thus, if the ungodly are said to be 'justified freely by the grace of God,' it is only 'through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' And not only so; but if in the whole process, and in the consummation, of this work of saving the lost, God shows, and throughout the ages to come shall continue to 'show, the exceeding riches of His grace,' it is still added: 'in His kindness toward us through Jesus Christ.'[4]

In like manner, 'the peace of God, which passeth all

[1] 1 Cor. 7: 15; Col. 3: 15; Phil. 4: 7. [2] Rom. 8: 32; 2 Cor. 9: 15. [3] Col. 1: 19; John 1: 16. [4] Rom. 3: 24; Eph. 2: 7.

understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' His name is 'the Prince of peace'—'King of Salem, which is, King of peace'—whose lowly advent in the flesh was announced by all the minstrelsy of heaven, proclaiming 'on earth peace.'[1] That prophecy of the sympathizing angels the Babe of Bethlehem died, and He now lives, to fulfil. 'He is our peace.' By His obedient life, and His atoning death, in our nature and in our stead, He hath reconciled us to God. Having destroyed the enmity, the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, He 'came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh,' and is still striving to gather together in one the sundered and scattered children of God.[2] His own peace He left with His disciples at His death. By many gracious words after His resurrection He confirmed that bequest. Ever since He ascended up on high that He might fill all things, He has been making good to the Church the promise He gave while He was yet with her, that, even amid the tribulations of the world, in Him she should have peace.[3] And still greater things than these His faithful love is pledged to perform for her. The tribulations of the world shall have an end. 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under her feet shortly.' 'They shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain.' And the Lamb's Wife, formed out of His bleeding side, and seated in bridal beauty on His throne, shall 'look forth as the morning'

[1] Phil. 4: 7; Is. 9: 6; Heb. 7: 2; Luke 2: 14.
[2] Eph. 2: 14–17; John 11: 52. [3] John 14: 27; 16: 33; 20: 19, 21, 26.

on the new heavens and the new earth, her unfading paradise, and her 'peace' shall be 'like a river.'[1]

And now, brethren, after even this brief, imperfect opening of the rich treasures of Christian truth and consolation contained in these few, familiar words, may I not ask you to *have faith in the Church*—the holy, catholic Church of God—to which that church at Thessalonica belonged, and to which this church in Kingston, if a church at all, equally belongs, having the very same standing, and the very same privileges? Have faith, I say, in the Church as an actual existence—as a Divine reality—as the greatest work of God on earth, yea, or in heaven—the receptacle of His boundless grace, and His own chosen rest—the body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, to which He gave His word and sacraments, and ministries, and quickening Spirit rendering all these effectual for salvation—the living organ, therefore, of the Holy Ghost—the representative of the glorified Son of man, sent by Him, as He himself was sent by the Father—the bountiful dispenser of God's grace and peace to the nations—the free mother of us all—the pillar and ground of the truth—the accredited intercessor here on earth, along with the great High Priest before the throne, on behalf of the dumb, though burdened and groaning, creation—and, finally, the joint heir and joint ruler of all things with her Lord, by whom and for whom all things were made.

[1] Rom. 16 : 20; Is. 11 : 9; Cant. 6 : 10; Is. 48 : 18; 66 : 12.

'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church'—it is, you know, an express article in the oldest and venerablest of all Church creeds, and yet how very few of the Church's own children in this place to-day could repeat it with any intelligent apprehension of its meaning, or any profound, heart-felt conviction of its truth! It was only last week that I read in one of our most popular and influential journals an extract from another journal of equal prominence in England, asserting it to be a fact admitting of no question, however much it might be deplored, that modern society has already well nigh swung clear of all the old ecclesiastical attachments. No doubt there is still enough of party spirit left among us, and all around. But faith in a party, or a denomination, or in our particular minister and congregation, is very far from being the same thing with faith in the Church.

And what else have we got now-a-days in the place of the latter? Many things. The substitute of not a few well-disposed persons is the Bible, interpreted according to their own private notions, and other good books, by reading which at home, they will tell you as something rather creditable to their intelligence, and not at all discreditable to their piety, they find they can edify themselves quite as well as by going regularly to church. This, of course, is just one manifestation of that spirit of independence and individualism that we so much boast of, as one of the glories of the age, even while it is rapidly reducing both Church and State to mere

sand heaps. Then there are others who go mainly for the Societies, as the Tract Society, the Temperance Society, the Anti-slavery Society; or the Orders, as the Odd Fellows, the Free Masons, and so forth; while as many more are absorbed in their circles and their mediums. Now, which of all these classes can lay its hand on its heart, as it bends in solemn worship before God, and say: 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church'? And are there not those in all of them who would rather consider themselves disparaged by being supposed capable of saying or believing anything of the sort?

Perhaps, brethren, it might not be difficult to account for this prevailing popular alienation, not so much from a habit of church-going, as from a religious faith in the Church. Alas, that the main element in the explanation must be the actual condition of the Church herself! For surely it were the very height of ignorance and vain conceit, to assert of the Christendom of our day, or of any one of its numberless sections, that it either realizes the New Testament ideal, or is even a fair reflection of what was realized in the apostolic age. No longer marshalled as an army with banners, 'fitly joined together and compacted,'[1] but broken up into rival, often hostile, battalions, each with its own disordered ranks; with no acknowledged living general officers at her head, caring for all, and whom none may honourably gainsay or resist, but with such partisan leaders as she has, busily looking after their several little sets of followers;

[1] Eph. 4 : 16.

not now visibly wielding the energies of the Spirit, 'the powers of the world to come,'[1] for the 'stilling of the enemy and the avenger,'[2] and for the relief of human woe, but emulously plying each new device of a mere worldly popularity; not now confronting the mightiest of her oppressors in the calmness of faith, and with the rebukes of a Divine authority, but basely cowering in the presence of every formidable sin; above all, the great community of the baptized—and that, whether Greek, or Roman, or Protestant, that is the Church, so far as it can be known and read of all men—instead of walking every where 'in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost,'[3] running on all hands the race of secular ambition and pleasure with the most worldly, and not seldom amazing even the heathen by their licentiousness and abominable idolatries—what cause for wonder, I say, if such a Church, so distracted, so mutilated, so enfeebled, so cowardly, so defiled, can no longer awe mankind as with the 'great fear' of a supernatural Presence—can no longer 'cast out devils'—and 'turn to flight the armies of the aliens'?[4]

But, dear brethren, while thus deeply feeling, and frankly confessing, the common sin and shame of Christendom, let us only the more earnestly hold fast our faith in the Holy Catholic Church. 'The Lord liveth; and blessed be our Rock; and let the God of our salva-

[1] Heb. 6 : 5. [2] Ps. 8 : 2. [3] Acts 9 : 31.
[4] Acts. 5 : 11; Mark 3 : 15; 16 : 17; Heb. 11 : 34.

tion be exalted.'[1] His nature is unchangeable; His love unabated; His grace inexhaustible; His 'gifts and calling without repentance.'[2] Believing, therefore, with the holy Apostle, in the Church's 'high calling of God in Christ Jesus,'[3] let us not hesitate to join him in his unceasing prayer to God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, for all that we need of 'grace and peace.' It is in answer to prayer that the heavens shall again be opened, and the latter rain shall descend, and a far mightier Pentecost, than has ever yet shaken the earth. For then, at the sudden call of love: 'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,' the Church, awaking from the troubled dream of ages, shall shake herself from the dust—shall put on strength—put on her beautiful garments—and, with 'the virgins her companions that follow her,' shall be presented to her Lord 'a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish.'[4]

Alas, alas, O ye baptized, dearly beloved and longed for, are there any of you that shall have no part in the joy of that great festival? I dare not feel toward any of you, non-professors though you may be—I cannot, I will not, address you—as strangers and foreigners and heathen men. *Ye* too are in the Church—*ye* too are engrafted into Christ. But the greater is your sin, and the more terrible your danger, if you refuse all living

[1] 2 Sam. 22 : 47. [2] Rom. 11 : 29. [3] Phil. 3 : 14.
[4] Is. 52 : 1, 2; 60 : 1; Ps. 45 : 14; Eph. 5 : 27.

union. Beware! Think, think of—ponder—this very day pray over—that awful word: 'If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.'[1]

'But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.'[2]

[1] John 15: 6. [2] Jude 20, 21.

LECTURE II.

I. Thess. 1: 2, 3.—'We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.'

Here, as frequently elsewhere, the Apostle, after the inscription and salutation, begins with words of thanksgiving and commendation. And this strain he continues in the present instance much longer than usual. In connection with sundry reminiscences of his own personal relations to the church, it may be said to extend through the whole of the first division of the Epistle.

It will also be observed that the commendation is conveyed very much in the spirit and form of thanksgiving, while the writer recounts the secret exercises of his soul before God. He thus gives his brethren a stronger guarantee of the depth, as well as of the sincerity, of his affectionate interest in them; while at the same time he reminds them, that for all their present attainments in a true religious life they were debtors to Divine grace.

I propose that we now consider, in the first place, *the marks*, as they are here enumerated, *of a prosperous church;* and then we shall notice *how the Apostle felt and acted in regard to such a church.*

I. First, *the marks of a prosperous church;*—what are they? What were they in Paul's estimation?

Observe, he says not a word about the size of the church, or about the wealth of its members, though there is reason to believe, that in both these respects the Thessalonian church was superior to many of her sister churches. But her outward condition, as we learn from these Epistles, was none the less a depressed and afflicted one. The sudden storm of persecution, which in the beginning had driven her founder from the midst of her, seems to have next turned its fury on the bereaved disciples, and it was still raging. But the hotter the furnace, the more brightly glowed the signatures of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus; their '*work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*'

Faith—Love—Hope;—the inseparable, the evermore abiding trinity of Christian graces—the all equally essential, mutually coöperative elements of the new man. For in the Church of God their home is—in every regenerate soul. All men, it is true, as men, have the capacity of believing, of loving, of hoping. What, but their varying and oftentimes conflicting faiths, and loves, and hopes, keeps the whole world in motion?

But what we do affirm, confidently and without qualification, is, that only in the Church do these original principles of our nature find their highest, best, satisfying objects, and exert their most beneficent influence. Here, in all questions about God and His relations to the universe, or about man's duties and interests and destinies, *faith*, trusting no longer to the wind-shaken reeds of fleshly wisdom, leans her weight on the rod and staff of the Divine testimony. *Love*, weary at last of worldly delights as her portion—'the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life'[1]—rests in the bosom of the Father of spirits, and thence beholds with an ardent, self-sacrificing sympathy, the household of faith, yea, all the dying children of men. And *hope*, no longer beguiled by the fleeting meteors of the night—the gilded and impure vapours of earth—fixes her upward gaze, her

> '—— looks commercing with the skies,
> Her rapt soul sitting in her eyes,'[2]

on a glory that fadeth not away—a hidden glory still, but soon to be revealed.

And then, of all these gracious experiences Jesus Christ is at once the Author and the Finisher, the Source and the Centre. The *faith* of God's elect is the faith of Jesus. Believing in God, we believe also in Christ as the Revealer of God, as being Himself none

[1] 1 John 2 : 16. [2] Milton, *Il Penseroso*.

other than the Eternal Word, God manifest in the flesh. Reverently sits the Church at His feet, as the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Light of the world, the Alpha and Omega of all Divine revelation—of all saving truth. 'I believe in the Holy Ghost,' as sent by Christ, as testifying of Christ, as forming men after the image of Christ—in 'the Holy Catholic Church,' as the Body of Christ—in 'the communion of saints,' as being all 'members in particular' of that one Body, and so 'members one of another'[1]—in 'the forgiveness of sins,' because 'it is Christ that died'[2]—in 'the resurrection of the body,' because 'Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept'[3]—in 'the life everlasting,' because Christ, 'the true God,' is also 'the eternal life;' and because He who was dead, and now liveth, is 'alive for evermore: Amen.'[4]

In like manner, if the believer 'dwelleth in *love*,' and, therefore, 'in God,' it is because he 'abideth in Christ's love.' 'Christ dwells in our hearts by faith,' and only thus do we become 'rooted and grounded in love.'[5] Of this love Christ is Himself the primary and supreme object, and that both for what He is in Himself, and for what He is to us. We love Him as 'the chiefest among ten thousand'—as 'altogether lovely'[6]—as uniting in His own person the glories of earth and heaven; and 'we love Him, because He first loved us.'[7]

[1] 1 Cor. 12: 27; Eph. 4: 25. [2] Rom. 8: 34. [3] 1 Cor. 15: 20. [4] 1 John 5: 20; Rev. 1: 18. [5] 1 John 4: 16; John 15: 10; Eph. 3: 17. [6] Cant. 5: 10, 16. [7] 1 John 4: 19.

And then, as all love tends, in the proportion of its own purity and strength, to identify itself with its object, who can thus love Christ, and not love those who love Him, and desire with us to serve Him—those whom Christ also loves, and for whom was shed the same precious blood? Nay, when we remember that He died for us, when we were all alike enemies—when we behold Him weeping over the guilty Jerusalem—when we stand near the cross, and hear that cry of pity for His murderers, we are ashamed to account even that a hard saying which bids us 'love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us.'[1]

And, in the last place, this immediate reference of all the graces to Jesus Christ, which we have seen to be implied in the case of faith and love, is here expressly affirmed of *hope*: '*hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*' Yes, Christ is 'our hope.'[2] This is that glorious mystery of God among the Gentiles, of which our Apostle speaks in writing to the Colossians (1 : 27)—'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' The man who believes in Christ, and loves Christ, at the same time hopes in Christ, and hopes for Christ. In other words, Christ is the foundation of His hope, and the object of it.

The foundation—the only foundation—chosen of God for this very end before ever the earth was—and in the fulness of time laid sure and steadfast by God's own hand, amid the darkness of nature, in the tears and

[1] Matt. 5 : 44. [2] 1 Tim. 1 : 1.

blood of His own Son. On such a foundation, O beloved, what burden can be laid, that it will not bear up unshaken? All the hopes of all the successive generations of the redeemed, and of each several individual of the innumerable throng—the hope of the free forgiveness of sins, however multitudinous, however heinous—the hope of grace sufficient for all exigencies, whether of duty or of trial—the hope of a final and decisive victory over all temptations and all enemies, the world, sin, Satan, death—the hope of perfect meetness for, and the secure possession of, the saints' inheritance —in a word, the salvation of a world, and the joy of angels, and the eternal weight of glory—the whole, shining, imperishable structure of the new creation—all, all rests on the one Rock, Christ.

But not only is He the foundation—He is also Himself the object of the Christian's hope—what he hopes for. And this, it is important that you distinctly understand—this, and not the other idea of a hope *in* Christ, is what is here intended; the hope, namely, of Christ's speedy personal return from heaven to earth. That this hope was peculiarly bright and earnest in the church of Thessalonica, and that it had been created and justified by the teachings of that church's great founder—these two points are perfectly evident, as I shall have frequent occasion to show you, from both Epistles. In the present instance, the writer's expression is equivalent, not to 'hope *in* our Lord Jesus Christ,' but 'the hope *of* our Lord Jesus Christ;' the grammatical relation being

precisely the same as in those other kindred phrases of the Apostle: 'the hope of salvation'—the 'hope of the glory of God'—'the hope of eternal life.'[1] Just so the Thessalonian hope was '*the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ*'—the hope of seeing Him back again among His friends, according to His own gracious promise—a promise repeated in His name by angels and apostles;—the hope of an everlasting union with Him in the glory of His kingdom. The church thus showed herself possessed of that third element in what Calvin on this place calls a *definition of true Christianity*, to wit, 'that, intent on the hope of Christ's manifestation, His followers despise all things else.'[2] And says another, scarcely less eminent as an interpreter of Scripture—I mean the holy Bengel:—'With the Thessalonians the expectation of Christ's coming was a clear matter. So pure was their condition, and so mature the character of their Christianity, that they could look out for the Lord Jesus from hour to hour.'[3]

As I have already hinted, that this view of the state of things at Thessalonica is of essential consequence to the right understanding of these Epistles, you will easily indulge me in still another extract, from what is justly regarded as one of the most delightful and important

[1] Ch. 5 : 8; Rom. 5 : 2; Tit. 3 : 7.

[2] 'Ut, in spem manifestationis Christi intenti, reliqua omnia despiciant.

[3] 'Expedita erat apud Thessalonicenses exspectatio adventus Christi. Tam lautus eorum status fuit et tam expedita Christianismi apud eos ratio, ut in horas possent Dominum Jesum exspectare.'

works, that Biblical scholarship has produced in our own day :[1] 'The royal state of Christ's second advent was one chief topic which was urgently enforced, and deeply impressed on the minds of the Thessalonian converts. This subject tinges the whole atmosphere through which the aspect of this church is presented to us. It may be said that in each of the primitive churches, which are depicted in the apostolic epistles, there is some peculiar feature which gives it an individual character. In Corinth it is the spirit of party, in Galatia the rapid declension into Judaism, in Philippi it is a steady and self-denying generosity. And if we were asked for the distinguishing characteristic of the first Christians of Thessalonica, we should point to their overwhelming sense of the nearness of the second advent, accompanied with melancholy thoughts concerning those who might die before it, and with gloomy and unpractical views of the shortness of life and the vanity of the world.'

Behold, then, yet again this heavenly choir—*Faith*, *Love*, *Hope*—the inseparable three, as I said before. For though in different churches they may exist in different degrees of strength and development, according to the varieties of natural temperament, religious education, and external circumstances, yet in no church, and in no truly regenerate soul, is any one of the three wholly wanting. In the family of God there are infants, and

[1] Conybeare and Howson's *Life and Epistles of St. Paul.*

there are strong men; but there is not one mutilated child. Where there is no faith in Christ, there can be no Christian love, and no Christian hope. And, on the other hand, wherever true faith is, there also you are sure to find the other two. If faith is the indispensable root, the unfailing fruit is love and hope. And accordingly of the first named, as you will remember, these two things are spoken: 'Faith, which worketh by love;' and: 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'[1]

It is, then, very natural and, so to speak, unavoidable, that all the three should be frequently presented together in Scripture. For example, in ch. 5: 8 of this Epistle: 'But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.' Again, Heb. 5: 10–12: 'God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' Still more nearly akin to our text is the exordium of the Epistle to the Colossians: 'We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.'

[1] Gal. 5: 6; Heb. 11: 1.

And as 'these three' now adorn the Church's pilgrimage in this world, so will they be her perpetual attendants in the mansions of her future rest. As Paul himself teaches us again, 1 Cor. 13: 13: 'And now' —that is, as the conclusion of the whole matter—'and now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love'—the greatest, that is, for those uses of blessing and edifying our brethren, of which the Apostle treats both before and after his magnificent description of love. But they are all three equally abiding. As in eternity the Church will be 'made perfect in love,'[1] so neither will she ever cease to believe in God, and with implicit trust to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; or yet to hope for, and unweariedly to press on towards, ever higher and still higher attainments in knowledge, holiness, and joy.

But you must next carefully notice, brethren, what mighty forces in the life of the Church these three principles are even now. There is not an idler, or a dreamer, among them. The Apostle speaks, not merely of the Thessalonians' faith, and love, and hope, but of their '*work* of faith, and *labour* of love, and *patience* of hope.'

Their *faith* was no dead faith, lying entombed in creeds and catechisms. It proved itself by its *works*, and showed them to be the fit successors of all the old worthies, 'who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the

[1] 1 John 4: 18.

mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.'[1]

As little was their *love* a pretence, a dissimulation, a sham, a mere lip-love, what the Apostle John calls a 'loving in word—in tongue.' On the contrary, it was fervent love out of a pure heart—a 'loving in deed and in truth.'[2] It *laboured*, or, as the word[3] fully imports, it *toiled*, in behalf of its objects—for their sakes shunning no efforts, no sacrifices, no dangers[4]—willing to lay down its life for the Lord and the brethren. If you recollect the very troubled and afflicted condition of the church, beset as she was on every side by Jewish malignity and Gentile fury, you will not find it difficult to conceive, how constant and how severe may have been the trial of the mutual love of her members.

And, of course, no less severe was the trial of their *patience*—so severe, that nothing could have endured under it but that patience, which sprang from their '*hope of our Lord Jesus Christ*,' of His appearing and kingdom. For 'if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.'[5] And so they did 'endure as seeing Him, who is invisible;'[6] beautifully exemplifying from day to day, and in the midst

[1] Heb. 11 : 33, 34. [2] 1 John 3 : 18; 1 Peter 1 : 22. [3] κόπος.
[4] Oecumenius: τὰ πάντα ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγαπωμένου πάσχειν: 'Suffering every thing for the beloved object.'
Rom. 8 : 25. [6] Heb. 11 : 27.

of all the fierce, incessant attacks of their enemies, the wisdom of the inspired precepts: 'Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. . . . Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.'[1]

Such, then, was the full, fair cluster of Christian graces and achievements, that characterized this church of Thessalonica.

II. And *how, in regard to such a church, did the Apostle feel and act?* This was our second topic, but it need not detain us long.

On Paul came daily 'the care of all the churches;'[2] and daily, under the pressure of so great a burden, he 'bowed his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'[3] At every such time of most intimate communion with the Father and the Son, his beloved Thessalonians were on his heart, and on his tongue: '*making mention of you in our prayers.*' Even there, prostrate '*in the sight of God and our Father,*' or *of our God and Father*,[4] he '*remembered without ceasing*'[5]

[1] James 5 : 7, 8. [2] 2 Cor. 11 : 28. [3] Eph. 3 : 14.

[4] τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν.

[5] Alford cites Rom. 1 : 9 as proof that '*without ceasing*' belongs to the last clause of v. 2 (an old construction, adopted by Benson, Bengel, Bloomfield, and others). He also follows Beza in translating μνημονεύοντες ('*remembering*') by *commemorantes, making mention* of. But this sense the word bears only in Heb. 11: 22, out of the 20 other instances of its occurrence in the New Testament. It is better likewise to retain the common arrangement, according to which the *continual* remembrance of their Christian character and its fruits is the reason, why the Apostle's reference to the Thessalonians in his prayers *always* took the form of thanksgiving to God.

their complete and lovely Christian character, and its fruits. And, as this remembrance never failed to call forth his thanksgiving to God for them all, so likewise it imparted the fervour and efficacy of an assured faith to his prayer, that the God of all grace would confirm what he had already wrought in them, and 'perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'[1]

Dear brethren of this church, we profess the very same principles with these our noble predecessors of the apostolic age. Are we proving their identity by a corresponding practice? Or are there any among us, whose faith can find no *work* to do, scarcely even a word to speak, for Christ, and the souls of men, and the edification of the church; but all that it does, or so much as pretends to do, is to come regularly to church, or at least regularly enough to keep up appearances, while every now and then it finds equal or greater satisfaction in idling away the sacred hours at home, or in a wretched, profane visiting and gossiping around in town or country? Is *this* the faith of any of you? Then 'what doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?' *that* faith? *such* a faith? And the answer is as solemn and explicit, as the question itself is startling: 'Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.'[2]

Then for your *love*, dear friends; has it any experience whatever in the blessed *toil* of beneficence? Does

[1] Phil. 1 : 6. [2] James 2 : 14, 17.

it find it great joy, to relieve the necessities of a brother —to soothe the sorrows of the poor—to shed its own heavenly light into the solitude of the widow and the fatherless? Or is it love of a very unlaborious sort—with no bowels of compassion—no pitying eye—no helpful hand—satisfied, yea, exhausted, with dropping perhaps a sixpence into the communion collection?

And finally, when we ourselves fall into life's manifold temptations, oh! whither do we look for comfort and deliverance? Among all our sources of consolation, do we ever actually realize this as one, not to say the greatest and dearest of all, 'The Lord is at hand'?[1] Or has that bright *hope* of the Thessalonians well nigh disappeared from among us in strange eclipse? And if so, must there not be something equally wrong here also?

'Consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things.'[2]

[1] Phil. 4 : 5. [2] 2 Tim. 2 : 7.

LECTURE III.

I. THESS. 1 : 4–7.—'Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost; so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.'

THE fourth verse—which all would now agree in translating thus: '*Knowing, brethren beloved by God, your election*'— is closely connected both with what precedes, and with what follows.

In the second and third verses, the Apostle had assured the Thessalonians, that not only did he make special mention of them in his prayers, but that this reference was ever accompanied with the giving of thanks to God for them all, while he remembered without ceasing before our God and Father their work of faith, and labour—or toil—of love, and patience of hope—patience flowing from the hope—of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now in the verse before us Paul evidently suggests another and a still deeper ground for his joy and gratitude, and confidence in prayer and praise to God on their account; namely this, that as the Thessalonian brethren thus ex-

hibited in their own principles and conduct all the marks of God's true children, so on God's part they were beloved by Him, and elected, or chosen.

In the Second Epistle to Timothy (2 : 19), having occasion to speak of certain errorists overthrowing the faith of some, he immediately comforts himself and the young Evangelist with the reflection : ' Nevertheless the firm foundation of God standeth,[1] having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' To the Apostle's eye *both* these seals—personal holiness and the Divine discrimination—adorned the church at Thessalonica. The third verse pointed to the one ; the fourth verse points to the other.

And here it is worth while for us to notice, first of all, how cordially the great Hebrew of the Hebrews hails these Gentile converts as his own *brethren*. Only a very few years ago, and ' sinners of the Gentiles '[2] would have been his mildest name for them. But from that old Jewish leaven his vehement soul had been cleansed by the peace-speaking, all-reconciling blood of Christ ; and now in this one familiar word of domestic endearment—*brethren*, or *brothers*—he reminds them that they too ' are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God '[3]—children of the same family—equally dear to the common Father.

[1] So the Greek. [2] Gal. 2 : 15. [3] Eph. 2 : 19.

Of course, when he expressly adds, '*beloved by God*,' he thinks of that special favour which God bears to His people. 'The Lord is good to all.'[1] So great is the benignity of His nature—such 'the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man'[2]—that He even swears by Himself that He has 'no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.'[3] Oh! what, then, must be the love that fills the heart of God, as He enters the gates of Zion, saying: 'This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.'[4] There are the children, not merely of His creative power and providential care, but of His redeeming grace. In the beautiful language of one of them, they 'have known and believed the love that God hath to them.'[5] And His joy is now to gather them all into His presence—to note in each countenance the features, however faint and marred, of His own image, and the varied expression of filial devotion, and dependence, and trust, and expectation—to listen to every utterance of their glad voices; yea, to every cry of their guilt, and fear, and helplessness; yea, to the silent breathings, the unutterable groanings, of the Spirit of adoption—and then to 'supply all their need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.'[6] He 'rejoices over them with joy; He rests in His love; He joys over them with singing.'[7] It was in *this* love of God that the Thessalonians largely shared.

[1] Ps. 145 : 9. [2] Tit. 3 : 4. [3] Ez. 33 : 11. [4] Ps. 132 : 14.
[5] 1 John 4 : 16. [6] Phil. 4 : 19. [7] Zeph. 3 : 17.

All which is still more evident, when Paul says: 'Knowing, brethren beloved by God, *your election*.' What does that mean? '*your election*'—'*election*.' We seem here to have got to a ticklish point.

You know there are a great many who, seldom as they read and little as they care about the Bible, yet feel, or affect—for I cannot but think that frequently there is a good deal of affectation in the matter—great surprise, or rather contempt and indignation, at the very idea of God presuming to elect any body over any other body. Sometimes, indeed, our philosophers of the grog-shop and the penitentiary seem to think nobody so fit as themselves either to elect, or to be elected, for any thing. And then there are multitudes more of professing Christians even, who have been told by their teachers that election is a cruel, frightful, theological monster, got up lately by Calvin, and ever since followed only by a gloomy, wondering crowd of Presbyterians of the stricter sort.

Now, for my own part, I have never been able to see how any man, who has not sunk down into absolute atheism, can help believing in election—believing in it just as much as Calvin did. 'Oh yes,' says one, 'I believe in election; but not in irrespective, unconditional, eternal, and personal election.'[1] I reply: If by all this you mean, that you do not believe in God choosing without some reason for His choice, then no more do I believe any such thing, and no more did Calvin.

[1] The epithets are from Dr. Adam Clarke *in loc.*

On the contrary, we hold that in every case there exists the very best possible reason, though known only to God Himself, and certainly not to be found in any supposed, independent merits of the creature; and, moreover, that in every case the choice works out its own accomplishment only through the mediation of the Son, and the gracious energy of the Spirit. 'No,' says the objector still, 'I cannot believe that God deals differently with different men without regard to some previous difference in the men themselves.' And then I just beg leave respectfully to insist that, unless you are simply an atheist, you *do* believe that very thing.

For example, you yourself were born in a land of gospel light and privilege, where 'from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.'[1] But far off, in the central depth of Africa, lives a fellow-man, a fellow-sinner, born there, and there ready to drop into his obscure grave, and he has never once seen a page of the Bible—has never once heard even the name of the 'one mediator between God and men'[2]—has never, therefore, had an opportunity of believing in Him. Now, 'who maketh thee to differ?' Chance, or God? 'And what hast thou'—in *these* essential respects, at any rate—'that thou didst not receive?'[3]—and receive, be it remembered, irrespectively altogether of your own merits or demerits. In this case of yourself and that dark savage, did not God

[1] 2 Tim. 3 : 15. [2] 1 Tim. 2 : 5. [3] 1 Cor. 4 : 7.

'determine the times before appointed, and the bounds of your habitation,'[1] 'the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil?'[2] yea, from all eternity? And if so—or rather, to put the same question in other words—did not God choose between you and the poor barbarian? and choose you, not because of any excellencies of yours, nor because of any greater guilt of his, but solely for reasons of which we can say nothing more, than that 'He would have mercy on whom He would have mercy, and He would have compassion on whom He would have compassion?'[3] Surely, to all this you *must* give your assent. But then, in doing so, you assent to the principle of election—of a personal, eternal, unconditional election—unconditional, in so far as the conditions are to be sought in the objects of it.

We do contend, therefore, that nothing is really gained, even in the way of solving difficulties, by saying with Dr. Adam Clarke, for instance, on the words before us, that God had now '*chosen* and *called* the Gentiles to the same privileges to which He *chose* and *called* the Jews.' For, in the first place, this very statement concedes, as we have seen, in regard to an immense sphere of the Divine operation—and that one preparatory and indispensable to all saving results—the identical doctrine of a free, sovereign discrimination, to evade or neutralize which it is so often and so confidently advanced.

But, in the second place, of the Gentiles themselves

[1] Acts 17 : 26. [2] Rom. 9 : 11. [3] Rom. 9 : 15.

the vast majority has not yet to this day been either called or chosen to even the outward privileges of the Church.

And, lastly, of those also who have been so chosen and called the vast majority disobey the call, frustrate the choice, and perish the more miserably in their unbelief. Just so it was at Thessalonica. And can any thing, then, so ineffective in itself, and of such uncertain issue, as this merely external call, be what Paul rejoiced in the knowledge of, as often as he thought before God of his brethren there? Can that be what he here adds by way of climax to his enumeration of the grounds of his continual thanksgivings? It is impossible.

No, no, my hearers. Dismissing all commentators, Arminian or Calvinistic, let us see if our Apostle will not explain himself. He does explain himself in a passage which you will find in the Second Epistle to this same church, ch. 2 : 13, 14, and which furnishes a striking parallel to the one on hand, and the very best illustration of it: 'We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Could language more plainly assert, that from everlasting God had chosen the Thessalonians to eternal life; and that in that purpose of His love toward them were included

all the successive steps and processes of His grace, whereby He was now preparing them for the glorious consummation?

But how, you may well ask, did Paul *know* this? '*Knowing*, brethren beloved by God, your election.' Had it been made a subject of special revelation to him? Or, when 'caught up to the third heaven,'[1] had he been allowed to look into the Lamb's book of life, and read therein the shining names of his brethren? Not at all.

It must be considered generally, that, in addressing the churches, the Apostles every where take for granted the truth of their profession, and their consequent participation of the character, privileges, and hopes of God's children. That is, they deal with them on the ground of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and of what they themselves claim to be as the result of that calling, even while it may be evident that great fear is felt respecting the fidelity or the sincerity of not a few of the members.

In the case before us, however, something more than this is conveyed. The writer, it is obvious, desires to be understood as not merely, with the courtesy of charity, making a formal and official recognition of their Christian prerogative, as a body, but rather as expressing a delightful, personal confidence, that in this instance the judgment of charity was also to an unusual

[1] 2 Cor. 12 : 2.

degree a judgment according to truth. In ordinary speech you might say of a friend: 'I *know* him to be an honest man,' without at all thereby intending to assert your own infallibility. Precisely so, I conceive, might the Apostle, without making any such pretension, feel himself prompted to say of the Thessalonians, in the vivid remembrance of the manifold manifestations of their faith, and love, and hope: 'Yes, I *know* them to be God's very elect.' On the same principle Peter proceeds in exhorting all who 'have obtained like precious faith' to 'give diligence to make their calling and election sure'[1]—sure, that is, not certainly in the secret counsels of God, but sure to their own consciousness, sure to all around them, and actually, historically sure.

That Paul is really speaking, not of an absolute knowledge, but of a strong conviction and reasonable certainty, is further apparent from the grounds on which this knowledge rested in his own mind. These are unfolded to us in the subsequent context.

'Knowing, brethren beloved by God, your election;'—here, at the end of the 4th verse, our English Bible has a full period, whereas a semicolon is quite sufficient. The other punctuation tends to obscure the connection; especially when the next verse is made to begin with *for*, instead of the writer's own emphatic *because*.[2] 'Knowing, brethren beloved by God, your election; *because our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assur-*

[1] 2 Pet. 1 : 1, 10. [2] ὅτι.

ance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes;'—here again I prefer a semicolon—'*and ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.*'

Observe, then, how the whole hangs together; a child can understand it:—Paul's ceaseless thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonians, of which he speaks in the 2d verse, was quickened and sustained, first, by his continual remembrance of their noble and consistent Christian character and conduct (v. 3); then, by his knowledge, or firm persuasion, that these brethren were not only dear to him, but beloved by God, and chosen vessels of His mercy (v. 4); and this knowledge was in its turn wrought in him by his recollection of the way, in which the gospel had been preached among them by himself (v. 5), and received by them (vs. 6, 7).

According to this, the fifth verse tells us how Paul preached the gospel at Thessalonica. '*Our gospel*'—the glad tidings committed to us and proclaimed by us—'*came not unto you in word only*'—in what Calvin calls 'the idle and dead eloquence of men;'[1] and Paul himself, 'the enticing words of man's wisdom'—'*but also in power*'—not so much, as some explain, the power of working miracles, though the word does often mean that, but the far finer and mightier energy of the living truth of God—'*and in the Holy Ghost*'—under His

[1] 'Inani et mortuae hominum facundiae.'

guidance and impulse; or, as it is expressed elsewhere, 'in demonstration of the Spirit and of power'[1]—'*and in much assurance*'—full certainty that what I delivered to you was God's message, and that in delivering it I but fulfilled God's will. And then, by way at once of relieving and justifying this apparent boasting, he adds: '*as ye know what manner of men*'—in holiness, and love, and zeal, and power—'*we were among you*'—*were found*, or *proved, to be*[2] *among you*—'*for your sakes*'—for your deliverance from the bondage of ignorance, and error, and sin, and death, into the glorious liberty wherein now ye stand. To the writer's knowledge, and the ground of it just mentioned, in regard to the Thessalonians, there was a blessed correspondence in what the Thessalonians knew of the writer.

From the wonderful way, then, in which Paul had found himself strengthened to declare the gospel at Thessalonica, he surely gathered that God had His own elect, though still hidden, ones in that city. And this gracious presumption was abundantly confirmed by the still more wonderful result. '*And ye*'—or, 'you, on your part,' the Greek pronoun has fully that force; you, poor, heathen idolaters, sitting then in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death—'*And ye*,' under the enlightening and transforming influence of the Divine truth thus faithfully announced by my lips, and illustrated by my life, '*became followers*'—*imitators*,[3] so the word is—'*of us, and of the Lord*'—of us, as we were of the Lord.

[1] 1 Cor. 2 : 4. [2] ἐγενήθημεν. [3] μιμηταί.

Nor was this imitation any mere affected, outward mimicry. It followed naturally and necessarily on the occupation of your minds and hearts with the new principles and forces: '*having received the word*'—that is, *accepted* it, *embraced*[1] it, as indeed the very messenger of God's love to you—'*in much affliction*'—that showed your sincerity and your earnestness. For truly there was nothing in the external circumstances and relations of the gospel, or of us, its ministers, that had the least tendency to allure or bribe you into a listless or hypocritical show of acquiescence. On the contrary, all worldly motives were aroused, and banded together in violent hostility. To profess Christ's gospel, I plainly told you, was to lose your life for His sake; and so you found it. But neither the warning nor the experience could hinder, or delay, or interrupt, your ready, cordial welcome, and steadfast allegiance: ye '*accepted the word in much affliction;*' and yet in no spirit of stoical obstinacy, or sullen defiance of your persecutors, but '*with joy of the Holy Ghost*'—the joy that springs only from His presence and operation in the soul, and which, perhaps, is never in this world so pure, and deep, and full, as when a man is enabled to suffer faithfully for Christ's sake and the gospel's. This joy of the Lord was the strength of the Thessalonians both in doing and suffering. 'New-born babes'[2] as they were, they could at once enter into the feelings of him who had begotten them through the gospel: 'Most gladly

[1] δεξάμενοι. Compare ch. 2: 13. [2] 1 Pet. 2: 2.

therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake : for when I am weak, then am I strong.'[1]

Observe now, finally, to what an extent this and other Christian accomplishments had been developed among these brethren : '*so that ye were*'—so that, while imitating us, *ye yourselves became*—'*ensamples*,'[2]—the original word is *types*, that is, *models*, *patterns;* and in the plural, you will notice ; individually ye became patterns[3] —'*to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia*'—not only throughout the extensive province of which your city is the capital, but in the adjacent province also of Achaia—which answers nearly to the modern kingdom of Greece, and in whose then capital, Corinth, Paul was now writing. How, then, could the Apostle for a moment doubt, that a people so faithful and exemplary in their Christian profession were indeed the called and chosen people of God, and very dear to the heart of God? And what a spirit of boldness and animation must this very confidence have infused into his prayers and thanksgivings on their behalf!

From what has been said, learn,

1. Dear brethren, in the first place, not to be greatly

[1] 2 Cor. 12 : 9, 10. [2] *γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς τύπους.*

[3] The singular *τύπον*, however, referring to the church collectively, is edited by Knapp, Meyer, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Alford.

troubled, when ignorant men, however zealous, vent their spleen against the doctrine of election, and taunt you, as Presbyterians, with believing in it. Christ's holy Apostle, it would seem, both believed and rejoiced in it.

2. But then remember, secondly, that, however fixed and immutable in the Eternal Mind be this 'purpose of God according to election,'[1] to your own hearts, and in any particular case, it can no otherwise be ascertained than by a holy and fruitful life.

3. From the recorded example, therefore, of Paul and the Thessalonians, let us next learn where lies the true glory and power both of the ministry and of the Church.

4. And, lastly, let the young disciple be fired with a generous ambition to overtake, and outstrip, even those who were in Christ before him, in all the graces of the Christian character, and in all the activities of the Christian life.

[1] Rom. 9 : 11.

LECTURE IV.

I. THESS. 1: 8–10.—'For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.'

THE writer had said that the new converts at Thessalonica were become patterns of the Christian character to all their brethren in Macedonia and Achaia; and in confirmation of this statement he adds the words that have just been read.

'For from you sounded out'—or *hath been sounded forth;*[1] not once for all, in the impulsive fervour of a first love, but by a steady and continuous proclamation not yet exhausted—'*the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia,*' the regions already mentioned, '*but also in every place,*' throughout the empire, or throughout Christendom, *your faith to God-ward is spread abroad*; *so that,*' go where we will, '*we*' find

[1] ἐξήχηται.

ourselves anticipated, and on that subject '*have no need to speak any thing*.'

The slight irregularity, which you perhaps notice in the construction of this eighth verse, has been explained, or got rid of, in various ways; sometimes by a mere change in the punctuation, thus: 'From you hath been sounded forth the word of the Lord. Not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God is spread abroad;'[1] or thus: 'From you hath been sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God is spread abroad.'[2] But, on the whole, I prefer to take the sentence as it stands in our English Bible. The Apostle was not apt to be troubled with a mere grammatical scrupulosity; and so, in the present instance, having begun with a phrase—'*from you hath been sounded forth the word of the Lord*'—that seemed to imply on the part of the Thessalonians more of evangelical influence, if not missionary activity, than could properly be asserted of them in reference to countries beyond their own Greek provinces, he may very well be supposed under this feeling to have exchanged it in the next clause for a weaker form of expression—'*your faith is spread abroad*,' or literally, '*hath gone forth*.'[3] And then the whole might be paraphrased thus: 'From you hath been sounded forth the word of the Lord, and not only is that true, as I have just intimated, in rela-

[1] Erasmus, Guyse, Lünemann.
[2] Martin's French Version, J. D. Michaelis. [3] ἐξελήλυθεν.

tion to Macedonia and Achaia, but every where, throughout all the household of faith, the fact and the circumstances and the thoroughness of your conversion are familiarly known.'[1]

Let us here observe, before going further, the fine exemplification furnished in the case of Thessalonica, of what may be called the Divine policy in the first planting of the Christian Church. You must have noticed that the book of the Acts of the Apostles is in no sense a history, minute or general, either of the Apostles or of their official labour; but rather an account of the rapid occupation, in Christ's name and the gospel's, of the great centres of influence, whether religious or political, commercial or social, from Jerusalem to Rome. Now of those centres one of the most important, as we have already seen, was Thessalonica. No sooner, therefore, was a company of disciples gathered there under the hand of Paul, and taught by grace to adorn their profession by a holy, loving, patient life, than the news ran east and west along the Egnatian Way, and southward over the Ægean sea to the ends of the Mediterranean; calling forth, wherever it reached, the mutual congratulations, the devout thanksgivings, and joyful emulation, of all the scattered children of God.

[1] It is not necessary, therefore, with Baumgarten, Olshausen, De Wette and Koch, to regard the two subjects and predicates of this verse as strictly synonymous equivalents; or, with Alford, to make the second pair 'merely an epexegesis of the former.'

And not only so, but doubtless the words of Christ also received a striking fulfilment: 'Ye are the salt of the earth. . . . Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'[1] Or, availing ourselves of the figure suggested by the text itself, we might say, that the peals of the gospel trumpet, ringing out so loud and clear at the head of the Thermaic Gulf, resounded thence far and wide into the realms of darkness.

It also well deserves mention, that this Christian eminence of Thessalonica was maintained by her through many subsequent generations. Her 'heroic age,' we are told,[2] 'was the third century. It was the bulwark of Constantinople in the shock of the barbarians; and it held up the torch of the truth to the successive tribes who overspread the country between the Danube and the Ægean. . . . Thus, in the medieval chroniclers, it has deserved the name of the "Orthodox City."'

No wonder, then, brethren, on the one hand, that our Apostle felt himself every where prompted to speak of this new miracle of the Divine truth and grace; or, on the other hand, that every where he found the fame of it to have already preceded him, so that he '*needed not to speak anything*.'

[1] Matt. 5: 13–16. [2] Conybeare and Howson, i. 347.

'*For*,' says he, '*they themselves show of us*'—*declare concerning us*[1]—'*what manner of entering in*'—*what sort of entrance*[2]—'*we had unto you.*' It is, we find, on the tongues of all men, how great a door and effectual was opened unto us, and with what a zealous promptitude, and daring, and patience, and with what energies of the Holy Spirit, we were enabled to make good our entrance. And then they are equally well informed of all that followed; '*how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead,* even *Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*'

In these words we have a simple and very instructive description of primitive, apostolical Christianity. Let us carefully consider it.

The whole description, you perceive, may be said to consist of just two strokes. The Thessalonians *turned to God from idols;* and they *waited for God's Son from heaven.*

I. From time immemorial the great majority of the members of this church with their forefathers had been idolaters, 'walking as other Gentiles walked, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart,' 'having no hope, and without God in the world.'[3] And all this while they were 'joined to idols.'[4] Idols

[1] περὶ ἡμῶν ἀπαγγέλλουσιν. [2] ὁποίαν εἴσοδον.
[3] Eph. 4 : 17, 18; 2 : 12. [4] Hos. 4 : 17.

filled the land. Their own streets and houses were full of them—'idols of silver and gold, the work of men's hands'—dead gods, that were no God, and could not save—false gods, that 'had mouths, but they spake not: eyes had they, but they saw not: they had ears, but they heard not; noses had they, but they smelled not: they had hands, but they handled not: feet had they, but they walked not: neither spake they through their throat'[1]—the amazing delusion and snare of our fallen race—that most monstrous of lies, which yet all kindreds of men, savage or civilized, are alike prone to believe, when once they have forsaken the truth of 'the uncorruptible God.'[2]

To '*turn from the idols*,'[3] therefore, was really to burst asunder one of the strongest ties, hereditary and patriotic, civil and domestic, that hold human society together. But, in the preaching of the everlasting gospel, the spell of a far mightier—an irresistible—attraction had fallen on them. It was as if the meridian sun had blazed forth on the darkness and tapers of midnight. With horror at their own past blindness and wickedness, and with indignant scorn of what till then they had most dreaded, they '*turned from the idols*'—from the whole base multitude of them—'*to God*,'—the one God, whom Paul preached as the 'God that made the world and all things therein,' and as the 'Lord of heaven and earth'—the '*living*' God, 'having life in Himself,' and 'giving to all life, and breath, and all things'[4]—the '*true*' God,

[1] Ps. 115: 4–7. [2] Rom. 1: 23. [3] τῶν εἰδώλων.
[4] Acts 17: 24, 25; John 5: 26.

very God, all that the great name imports, alone able to fulfil every function of Deity, and faithful to His every word and promise. They '*turned*' to Him, and that with no sidelong glance—no timid or crafty thought of compromising between His paramount, exclusive claims and their own present ease and safety—but with the entire force, the full, direct gaze, of their emancipated nature ;—'*turned*,' indeed, as they thought of the past, with shame and confusion of face, with lowly confessions and many tears ; but with none the less of filial confidence and hope, and with all the more earnest purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience.

Thessalonica is known to have been no exception to the rule of moral degradation, that has always and every where illustrated the fantastic creeds and superstitions of the heathen. And now, in coming under the dominion of a purer faith, the feeling of many hearts must have been that expressed in another Epistle : 'The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.'[1] They turned to God, saying : 'O Lord our God, other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us : but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name.'[2]

For you will note the design and intent of this turning, as here recorded : '*ye turned to God from the idols*,' not merely as having found a more rational and respect-

[1] 1 Pet. 4 : 3. [2] Is. 26 : 13.

able creed, and as wishing now to be known by it—nor in any vain spirit of philosophical disquisition and disputation about the heavenly light—and least of all with any airs of contemptuous superiority over your poor, blinded countrymen ;—'*ye turned to God from the idols to serve the living and true God*'—to serve Him in all His ordinances and commandments blameless, and especially in furthering His work of mercy in our ruined world—to serve Him in the face of all opposing influences—with every faculty of soul, and body, and estate—in life, and in death.

This, then, is the *first* of the two grand features that characterized the Thessalonian, and every other apostolic, church. Her members were visibly, avowedly, the servants of the living and true God.

And what, brethren, was the *other* sign and evidence of their conversion?

II. '*And to wait for His Son from heaven*,' or rather, *from the heavens ;* [1] just as the writer to the Hebrews speaks of Him again and again as the 'great High Priest that is passed *into the heavens*'—yea, 'made higher than *the heavens*.' [2]

Now in the Church of God it is not a more certain thing, that 'He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things,' [3] than it is, that He that ascended is the same also that shall yet again descend in power and great

[1] τῶν οὐρανῶν. [2] Heb. 4: 14; 7: 26. [3] Eph. 4: 10.

glory to the scene of His former sufferings. So Paul had taught the Thessalonians, and so they believed, and the Holy Catholic Church evermore repeats the testimony in all her creeds and confessions, in all lands, and throughout all time.

But more than this is asserted of the Thessalonians. Not only did they believe that the Son of God would come again from the heavens; they also '*waited*' for Him;—language which does unquestionably imply that, for aught they knew to the contrary, the advent might occur during their own lifetime. It was not a subject, therefore, that might be safely dismissed to the quiet seclusion and oblivion of an unread, however carefully guarded, parchment, as something with which, though it would no doubt come true in the end, they for their part had no immediate, personal, practical concern. On the contrary, there was not an article in their creed, that excited livelier emotions of joyful interest—not one that awakened and sustained such vigilance and intentness of expectation.

And yet eighteen centuries have since run their weary course, and still the heaven receives the Lord. Were not these converts, then, deceived in their expectation? And was not their '*waiting*' a very fruitless expenditure of desire and patience?

My answer is this:—In so far as they, or any of them, held it as a matter of faith, or even of opinion, that the Lord would certainly return in that age, to that extent, of course, they were mistaken. But if they

simply believed that His coming was, in general terms, a thing near at hand, and if, not knowing precisely how near it was, they felt it to be at once their duty, their interest, and their delight, to be ever '*waiting for*' it and preparing for it, then they were not mistaken, but just did what their inspired teachers and the Lord himself required of them. My brethren, I speak not hastily when I affirm, that the doctrine of the atonement is not capable of easier and more triumphant demonstration than is the fact, that this, and nothing else, was the common, the universal, faith and experience of apostolic Christendom.

Observe that there was nothing in this attitude of the model church of Macedonia, that Paul thought it necessary to reprove or correct. So far from that, he mentions it as the legitimate and immediate fruit of conversion—as something that the brethren were everywhere talking of with joy, and to the honour of Thessalonica. On the other hand, had the Thessalonians, when they '*turned to God from the idols*,' not been seen at the same time to fasten their eager and expectant gaze on Him who stands at the right hand of God, and so to be '*waiting for God's Son from the heavens*,' there was not a church in Christendom that would not have mourned over what it must have regarded as a strange and unaccountable defect in their Christian character. Wherever the grace of God then appeared, it taught men, as one grand motive to all sober, and righteous, and godly living, to 'look for that blessed hope, and the glorious

appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ;'[1] yea, to look for it as near—as a thing to be loved, and hastened, and waited for at all seasons, whether of sorrow or of joy.

The proof of these statements, as I think, covers the surface of the New Testament, and pervades its entire spirit and texture. As a very small sample merely, take the following texts with not a word of comment: Rom. 13: 11, 12, 'Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand.' 1 Cor. 1: 7, 'So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Phil. 4: 5, 'The Lord is at hand.' Heb. 10: 25, 37, 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. . . . For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.' James 5: 8, 'The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' 1 Pet. 4: 7, 'The end of all things is at hand.' 1 John 2: 18, 'Little children, it is the last time.' In fact, 'they that look for Christ,' 'they that love His appearing,' are New Testament definitions of Christians.[2]

I shall only add here, that all this is in strict accordance with the teaching, the most solemn warnings and injunctions, of our blessed Lord himself: 'Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. . . . Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour

[1] Tit. 2: 11–13. [2] Phil. 3: 20; Heb. 9: 28; 2 Tim. 4: 8.

as ye think not the Son of Man cometh. . . . And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.'[1] Such, dear brethren, were His words, while He was yet with us. And, oh, it is the same voice that, from His place of ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, still speaks to the heart of His widowed and mourning Church: 'Surely I come quickly.' At Thessalonica that voice was heard; and the instant, ardent response of all the disciples was: 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.'[2]

The rest of the 10th verse well exemplifies the Apostle's habit of dwelling, wherever he has a chance, on the name, and history, and work of his Master. It also furnishes abundant explanation and justification of the Thessalonians' 'waiting for the Son of God from the heavens.'

'*Whom He*,' that is, God, '*raised from the dead*,' when even to their estate of humiliation He had for your sakes descended. You trust in—you wait for—no dead Saviour; but One who, by His resurrection from the dead, was powerfully declared to be indeed the Son of God;—'even *Jesus*,' that name so dear to you and to me, and for such good reason dear—'*Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come*,' or more literally, *who delivereth us* — or simply, *our Deliverer* — '*from the coming wrath*.'[3] The deliverance of believers, though not accomplished, is already in sure and steady pro-

[1] Matt. 24: 42, 44; Mark 13: 37. [2] Rev. 22: 20.

[3] τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης.

gress. Virtually, indeed, it was secured for us on the cross. But it is confirmed to our consciousness by daily, fresh supplies of grace—by the inward witness and operations of the Spirit—and by the assured hope of glory.

The verses we have thus reviewed are very full of the most important practical instruction.

1. Let the bright example of Thessalonica stimulate us as a young church of Christ to undertake great things for our Lord, and, first of all, by our holy life to 'adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.'[1]

2. Secondly, from the joy of all the other churches over Thessalonica you may learn the lesson of a quick and lively sympathy with the various members, however remote, of the body of Christ. But,

3. In the third place, my professing brethren, has this profession of yours been truly a '*turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God?*' Or has it in any case been a bare, empty, miserable assumption of the form of godliness, as an opiate to your conscience while persistently denying the power? Or, at any rate, did you not reserve, and have you ever since been carrying hidden in your bosom, some one little favourite idol of your own?

4. In the fourth place, ask yourselves how it comes that of not one church, I suppose, in Kingston, and

[1] Tit. 2 : 10.

scarcely of one in all the land, could it with any tolerable degree of plausibility even be reported, that she is '*waiting for the Son of God from the heavens.*' Perhaps I could give you some explanation of what must be allowed to be a most remarkable fact. But for the present I prefer to present it as a problem for your own solution. Meanwhile, I must not withhold the expression of my conviction, that one reason, and the main one, of the Church's marked and general declension in love and power is this very darkening of the primitive hope of her Lord's return. She is waiting for very many things, dear brethren, but not for Christ;—for the multiplication of railroads and telegraphs, and Tracts and Bibles, and churches, and ministers, and missionaries; for the opening of all lands to these and other means and instrumentalities of a Christian civilization; and for the descent from heaven, to render these agencies universally effectual, of Christ's Spirit; but *not*, mark you, *for Christ Himself.* In a word, she is waiting for the Millennium; but still it must be a Millennium without Christ—a Millennium of merely spiritual influence, not of Christ's own personal presence and power to restore all things—to make all things new. And yet says Calvin: 'Whosoever would persevere in the course of a holy life, let him apply his whole mind to the hope of Christ's coming.'[1] And in all Calvin's writings I know not of a truer or wiser word than that.

[1] 'Ergo quisquis in vitae sanctae cursu perseverare volet, totam mentem applicet ad spem adventus Christi.'

5. In the fifth place, let us not forget, even amid the noise of national and international jubilee, that God has His own unsettled controversy with this world, and that for the ungodly nations, for degenerate Christendom, for unfruitful professors, for all who amid gospel privileges and opportunities still 'know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,'[1] there is '*wrath*' in store; yea, that this wrath is '*coming*' even now—is even now on the road—the Divine justice being never for a moment weary or asleep, but, at however slow a pace, and by whatever secret and circuitous paths, advancing continually, with no single step backward, nearer and still nearer to its prey. And

6. Finally, remember, dear hearers, that He for whom we are to wait is the 'same Jesus,'[2] who now, by His death and resurrection from the dead, delivers His people both from sin and from wrath. Only, therefore, as we share in the *present deliverance* by dying with Christ, and rising again with Him 'after the power of an endless life,'[3] can we safely indulge the hope of sharing in the blessedness and glory of the final reunion of His friends.

[1] 2 Thess. 1 : 8. [2] Acts 1 : 11. [3] Heb. 7 : 16.

LECTURE V.

I. Thess. 2 : 1–4.—'For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: but even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. For our exhortation *was* not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.'

In the preceding chapter the Apostle had spoken generally of the character of his own ministry at Thessalonica, and of the great result which had followed in the formation in that city of an exemplary and influential church. In the chapter now before us the same topics are resumed, and treated, the former of them especially, at length and in detail. The first twelve verses are occupied with a description of Paul's preaching, and other evangelical labours; the next four verses, with an account of the Thessalonians' reception of the word, and of their sufferings for its sake.

There is some doubt as to the connection indicated by the introductory word '*for*.' I understand it in this way:—The writer had just been saying (ch. 1 : 9, 10)

that every where the people of God were speaking of the manner and the consequences of his labours at Thessalonica. 'But,' says he now, 'with regard to the first point—to wit, the spirit and methods of my ministry—I can summon still more competent witnesses. As I have already appealed, so I again appeal, to yourselves. *For* ye yourselves know, brethren, our entrance unto you, &c.'

Every one familiar with Paul's writings and discourses is aware, that it is not an uncommon thing for him to talk a good deal about himself. In particular, he is very apt to descant on the authority of his office, and the fidelity with which he discharged it. All this, however, from no spirit of vain glory, but simply in his anxiety about the success of the gospel itself. You must remember that the honour and credit of the gospel were much more closely identified with the character and reputation of the Apostles, than is true nowadays in the case of the ordinary pastors and teachers of the Church. Not merely were the former interpreters of the Divine word; they were also themselves authoritative, though secondary, fountains of the Christian doctrine and discipline; delivering to us what they received directly from the Lord. According to the estimation, therefore, in which they were held, would be in a great measure the reception of their message. It was in this respect with Paul somewhat as it had been with his Master, who, though He 'received not honour from

men,'[1] was yet by no means indifferent to the opinion of those around him. 'Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? Whom say ye that I am?'[2] The answer to this question involved eternal interests. And in like manner the young faith of the Thessalonians might well be strengthened, as often as they recalled to mind the amazing illustration of the grace and power of God, with which they had been favoured in the person and work of their great teacher.

It deserves also to be noticed that, even while for these reasons thus frequently indulging, under the impulse of present feeling or of temporary conflicts, in self-assertion and self-vindication, the Apostle was at the same time led to furnish, for the guidance and warning of all future generations, the most vivid and affecting portraitures of whatever constitutes and adorns the true servant of Christ and the Church. Alas, that Church history should be, to so frightful an extent, but a record of our failure to copy so bright an example!

"*Ye yourselves know, brethren, our entrance unto you, that it was not vain.*'[3] I have said that the first twelve verses are taken up with an account of the apostolic ministry at Thessalonica. Now, unless this very first clause is an exception, and the only one, to that arrangement, what the writer denies is, not so much that his labours had been *in vain, fruitless, useless*, as that in themselves they had been *vain, idle, unsubstantial, empty*

[1] John 5 : 41. [2] Matt. 16 : 13, 15. [3] κενή.

of all human earnestness, and of Divine truth and force. Says Calvin, they were 'not empty, as ambitious men make much pompous display, when there is nothing substantial about them: for *empty* is here the opposite of *efficient*.'[1] Or, as another old commentator[2] expresses the same idea: 'Something empty is meant, with nothing in it solid, true and firm, and that not merely in the result, but also not even in the process.' It is worth noting, that the earliest English version of the Bible—that of Wiclif from the Vulgate—has in this place just what I propose, 'was not *vain*'; and that what was called the Bishops' Bible—the one to which our Translators were required in general to conform—has this comment in the margin: 'Not in outward show and in pomp, but in travail and in the fear of God.'

Observe, then, that Paul's entrance was no easy, random, careless matter[3]—not at all an affair of rhetoric or ostentation—no holiday diversion, or intellectual pastime, or weekly entertainment of a respectable sort. On the contrary, it was a fact of the utmost gravity for him and for that renowned city—a crisis, an epoch, in the history of both.

This interpretation is confirmed[4] by the strong, posi-

[1] 'Non fuisse inanem, ut ambitiosi homines multum pompæ ostendunt, quum nihil habeant solidi: nam *Inane* Actuoso hic opponitur.'

[2] Musculus: 'Rem significat vacuam, nihil in se solidi, veri ac firmi, non modo in effectu, sed et ne in actu quidem habentem.'

[3] Chrysostom: *οὐκ ἀνθρωπίνῃ, οὐδὲ ἡ τυχοῦσα*: 'not of man, nor at random.'

[4] Pelagius: 'non est inanis sermo, qui completur constantia pas-

tive contrast that is immediately subjoined in the second verse. There he first reminds his brethren of the circumstances that preceded his arrival among them. He had just been suffering for the truth, '*having suffered before, and been shamefully treated*,' or *insulted, outraged*, '*as they knew, in*[1] *Philippi.*' He refers, of course, to the ignominious scourging and imprisonment, to which he and Silas had been subjected, as narrated in the 16th chapter of the Acts. And what followed? Did those heralds of salvation, irritated and repelled by treatment so violent and injurious, at once withdraw into Asia, whence the midnight cry of human danger and helplessness had summoned them? No; pressing steadily forward, their very next appearance is in the capital of this heathen province. There, smarting still from the stripes of Philippi, '*we were bold*,' says Paul, '*in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.*' He carried the same firm front against all opposers, nor did his tongue once falter in the free, unreserved proclamation of the truth. And, moreover, this boldness was not that of the mere natural man, or the stubborn persistency of pride. It was the heroism of faith. It sprang from the preacher's assurance of his own personal relations to God as a redeemed sinner, and from his consciousness of a Divine

sionis'; 'that is no empty discourse, which is filled with the constancy of suffering.'

[1] ὑβρισθέντες ἐν. The καί (*even*) before προπαθόντες (*having suffered before*) is omitted by all recent editors, on large authority of MSS. and versions.

strength strengthening him for the fulfilment of a Divine commission, in the delivery of a Divine message.

The servant of Christ soon found the need of these supernatural aids. The Jews of Thessalonica, who seem to have been even unusually illiberal and malignant, joining themselves in base league with the vilest elements of the mob, succeeded in stirring up fresh commotions. And, while these outward conflicts had no effect in shaking the preacher's intrepidity, yet, as he thought of the quarter whence they originated, and the fatal issues for both Jew and Gentile to which they tended, they doubtless added not a little to his anxiety and inward agonizing struggle. All this—the fightings without, and the earnest solicitude and fears within—are included in the '*much contention, with*' which, or, *in*[1] which—for the phrase indicates rather the condition and circumstances of the preacher, than the manner of his preaching—Paul spake the gospel of God.

In the third and fourth verses this boldness and freedom of utterance are still farther accounted for by a declaration in general terms of certain abiding characteristics of the apostolic ministry; and then from the fifth verse to the twelfth it is shown how these characteristics manifested themselves at Thessalonica. By simply substituting '*is*' for '*was*' in the third verse, and '*have*

[1] *ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι.* De Wette, Lünemann, and Alford, restrict the reference to outward difficulties; but improperly. See Col. 2:1; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7; where the Greek word is the same.

been' for '*were*' in the fourth—changes clearly required by the Greek[1]—the general reference of both verses becomes at once apparent.

'*For our exhortation*'—the same word[2] is often rendered *consolation, comfort*. Here it combines the two senses to express the entire work of 'persuading men,'[3] or, as Bengel has it, 'the whole work of evangelical proclamation, imbued with the sweetness of the emotions.'[4] '*For our exhortation* is *not of deceit*, or *delusion*.[5] Our preaching does not come from[6] being ourselves deceived; of that our assurance is perfect and unwavering.' And you recollect how this confidence of Paul was shared by his great peers. 'We have not followed cunningly devised fables,'[7] says Peter. And says John: 'We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.'[8] Now, it is easy to understand, what a tone of decision, fervour, and force, must have been given to the speech of these men by this calm conviction of the truth, the absolute truth, of what they uttered.

'*Nor of uncleanness*,' adds Paul, thereby disclaiming all impure motives in the announcement of the truth

[1] This verse being but the negative side of what is stated in v. 4, the time of *λαλοῦμεν* (*we speak*) and of *δεδοκιμάσμεθα* determines that of the predicate supplied in v. 3.

[2] *παράκλησις*. [3] 2 Cor. 5: 11.

[4] 'Totum praeconium evangelicum, passionum dulcedine tinctum.'

[5] *πλάνης*—the same word as in 2 Thess. 2: 11. In 7 other instances out of 8 the English Version has *error*; and in that sense it is now commonly understood here also.

[6] *ἐκ*. [7] 2 Pet. 1: 16. [8] 1 John 4: 14.

itself. It was not 'the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life'[1]—no wish to gratify any evil propensity of our defiled nature—that impelled him onward.

'*Nor in guile.*' As the motives of his ministry were pure, so its methods were simple and sincere. Himself persuaded of the truth and infinite importance of that which he declared to others, and having no sinister designs of his own to accomplish by it, he utterly abjured all the tricks and stratagems of impostors—'the sleight of men'—their *dice-playing* and gambling frauds, as the word properly denotes—'and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.'[2] He was not at all ambitious of a reputation for over-dexterous management, or for the ability to carry his point by the underhand surprises, and paltry manœuvres, of the pettifogger. Or as he expresses himself in writing to the Corinthians: 'We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully. . . . For we are not as many, which corrupt'—*deal as hucksters with*—'the word of God.'[3]

And here again you perceive how 'a conscience' thus 'void of offence toward God and toward men'[4] must have infused vigour and animation into the apostolic address. As, on the one hand, 'conscience makes cowards of us all,' so, on the other, 'the righteous are bold as a lion.'[5]

[1] 1 John 2 : 16. [2] Eph. 4 : 14 (*κυβεία*).
[3] 2 Cor. 4 : 2; 2 : 17 (*καπηλεύοντες*). [4] Acts 24 : 16. [5] Prov. 28 : 1

Pass now to the fourth verse, and you will there find the direct contrast, or positive complement, of the negative statements of the third: '*But as we have been allowed*'—not in the sense of *permitted:* but as our Lord said to the Jews, 'Ye allow the deeds of your fathers,' that is, *ye sanction them, approve of them*, so here: *as we have been approved by God to be intrusted with the gospel;*'[1]—not that Paul meant for one moment to lay claim to any original, independent worthiness or sufficiency of his own for a trust so sacred, so precious. Whatever worthiness or sufficiency God found in him, God first put in him. 'Not,' says he, 'that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament.'[2] And in like manner, when he writes to Timothy: 'I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry,'[3] he just as little there forgets, or denies, that 'by the grace of God he was what he was.'[4]

'*As*,' then, '*we have been approved by God to be intrusted with the gospel, even so we speak*,' in a way befitting this Divine approval, and the solemnity of the commission. 'As of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ;'[5]—'speaking the truth in love;'[6] and only 'by manifestation of the truth com-

[1] *δεδοκιμάσμεθα ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ πιστευθῆναι.*

[2] 2 Cor. 3: 5, 6. [3] 1 Tim. 1: 12. [4] 1 Cor. 15: 10.

[5] 2 Cor. 2: 17. [6] Eph. 4: 15.

mending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God;'[1]—'*not*,' therefore, '*as pleasing men*;' not as making that our object, and sacrificing to it the honour and rights of Him that sent us, and the truth, or even the explicitness, of His message. There was much in the gospel, Paul knew, that must be displeasing to men. Its holiness, its mysteries, its humbling disclosures of our utter ruin and helplessness, the unbending severity of the law, yea, the absolute freeness of grace itself, and of all its gifts, pardon, righteousness, and eternal life,—these are 'the things of the Spirit of God,' which 'the natural man receiveth not.'[2]

The temptation is thus great, and the poor human nature of us ministers is in continual danger of yielding to it,—nay, one notable instance, at least, is on record, when one of Christ's greatest Apostles fell before it,—the temptation, I mean, to lessen our own personal difficulties, and facilitate and extend our mere private, personal acceptance and influence in the community, by a concealment, or modification, of the heavenly doctrine. Against this, however it might cloak itself under the cowardly pleas of a false expediency, Paul ever maintained a watchful jealousy over himself. To the churches of Galatia, which had 'received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus,' he afterwards had occasion to address that affecting inquiry: 'Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the

[1] 2 Cor. 4:2. [2] 1 Cor. 2:14.

truth?'[1] But not even to regain their favour, would he abate one jot or tittle of his unpalatable teaching. 'For,' says he in the same letter, 'do I now persuade' —that is, seek at all hazards, and as my main object, to conciliate the favour of—'men or God? or do I seek'—in a debased, unscrupulous, selfish spirit—'to please men? for if I yet pleased men'—if that were what I made my business—'I should not be the servant of Christ.'[2] So Christ Himself taught us: 'No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.'[3] It is but another application, brethren, of the same principle to say, that a minister of the gospel cannot serve Christ and popularity. A faithful minister, indeed, may be popular, and never can be indifferent about securing for himself the affection and confidence of those amongst whom he labours, just as a true servant of God may be a rich man, and may have used all diligence in business to become so. But as in the latter case Mammon is not the master, to dictate and control, to reward or punish, so neither in the former case is popularity. In both cases the one Master is in heaven; and that Master is God.

'*As we have been approved by God to be intrusted with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God which trieth*'—or *proveth;* the word is the same as in the first clause—'*who proveth our hearts.*' 'After

[1] Gal. 4: 14, 16. [2] Gal. 1: 10. [3] Matt. 6: 24.

all,' as if he had said, 'men look on the outward appearance, and by that only can they judge of us; as by the plainness, and tenderness, and urgency of our mode of dealing with them; by the zeal, and abundance, and effectiveness of our efforts for their good; and by the apparent consistency and sanctity of our life. But the Lord seeth not as man seeth. Beyond all these outward manifestations, or it may be disguises, the Lord looketh on the heart;[1] and, through the windings and mazes of that otherwise inscrutable labyrinth, His eyes of flame shine like the lightning, but with enduring gaze, into its innermost recesses—to the very fountain-head, be it pure, or be it polluted, whence flow the issues of life. Oh then, that, in speaking God's word to men, we may please God! From Him alone this word of salvation came. By Him alone have we been intrusted with it. To Him alone, the all-seeing, infallible, impartial Judge, must we finally render our account. And only in His hand is the beaming crown, our exceeding great reward.'

Behold, then, dear brethren, in conclusion, how great a thing the gospel is, and what great things have been said of it, and suffered for it, in other days. It is 'the gospel of God.' God is the Author of it. God is the Sender of it. God is the Avenger of it. And remember, that, however feeble and unworthy the ministration of it under which you sit, it is still the same gospel that

[1] 1 Sam. 16·7.

Paul preached, and the Thessalonians received, and now it comes to you, laden and enforced, not only by the Divine authority and sanction, but by the experience also and testimony, living and dying, of all the past generations of the Church.

Nor ought I to wish, brethren, to hide myself, even in your presence, from the instruction, and warning, and reproof, that sound evermore from the grave of Paul to all who 'take part of this ministry.'[1] Much rather, as called of God and God's people to dispense to you Paul's gospel, would I love to linger within the glory of his example—following him, as he followed Christ—and to be thereby at once humbled and quickened. Help me, oh my friends, by your prayers, that, whensoever and howsoever it may please God to terminate my labours among you, Paul's boast, Paul's joy, may be mine: 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.'[2]

[1] Acts 1:25. [2] 2 Cor. 1:12

LECTURE VI.

I. Thess. 2 : 5–8.—'For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God *is* witness: nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor *yet* of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.'

At the beginning of this chapter the Apostle again reminds the Thessalonian brethren of the freedom, and boldness, and patient earnestness, with which he had spoken the gospel to them at the first. And having in the third and fourth verses asserted in general terms the truth of his doctrine, the purity of his motives, and the simplicity and godly sincerity of his ministerial methods, he now proceeds to show in detail, under the form of a continuous appeal to the church and to God, how these characteristics had developed themselves in the capital of Macedonia.

First, speaking negatively, he disclaims having attempted to win his way among them by dint of *flattery;* and this is introduced in immediate connection with what he had just been saying about pleasing God, and

not men. Paul knew perfectly well that, as there is no more obvious or common, so neither is there any more effective way of pleasing men, than by flattering them. And the modes of doing it are very various, and of a more or less delicate and crafty sort, to men's faces, or behind their backs. You can flatter them on the ground of their own personal qualities or performances, or through their families, or as members of society, or of the commonwealth, or in regard to their religious character, and prospects for eternity.

Now to nothing of all this had Paul condescended. '*For neither at any time used we flattering words*'—*words*, or *speech*, *of flattery*[1]—'*as ye know*.' He had found the Thessalonians 'walking as other Gentiles walked, in the vanity of their mind,'[2] and how had they been—not flattered—but startled and dismayed, when the servant of the living and true God suddenly poured the light of heaven on the darkness and desolations of ages! 'As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come'—the coming wrath of God on all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men—not only had they, like Felix, 'trembled'[3] under the convictions of their own consciences, but in their utter helplessness, and self-loathing, and despair, many poor idolaters had beset the preacher with the Philippian cry: 'What must we do to be saved?'[4] And then Paul told them the amazing story of what had transpired but a few years before, right across there in Syria. He proclaimed the

[1] λόγῳ κολακείας. [2] Eph. 4: 17. [3] Acts 24: 25. [4] Acts 16: 30.

name of Jesus, as the only 'name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved'[1]—Jesus, God's own Son, 'delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification,'[2] and once more, and shortly, to 'be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire,'[3] and in the glory of His kingdom. Such had been the apostolic gospel. The Thessalonians heard it, believed it, and were saved. But there was nothing in all this, in the substance of it or in the manner of it, in the least fitted to flatter them; but every thing, '*as they*' well '*knew*,' to confound, and humble, and subdue.

'*Nor a cloak of covetousness*,' adds Paul; nothing that he said or did had been intended to cloak—cover—disguise—a covetous spirit; and, since this was a point of which others could less safely judge than of the tone of his public addresses, he here makes his appeal to the Searcher of hearts: '*nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness.*' It was a point, moreover, on which the generous nature of the great Apostle ever felt peculiarly sensitive. 'I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel,'[4] he exclaims, in addressing the elders of Ephesus. And in writing to the Corinthians: 'I seek not yours, but you. . . . Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?'[5] Such being the bearing of the man himself in this matter, it is very

[1] Acts 4: 12. [2] Rom. 4: 25. [3] 2 Thess. 1: 7, 8. [4] Acts 20: 33. [5] 2 Cor. 12: 14, 17.

natural to find him insisting three times over in the Pastoral Epistles, as Peter also in his First Epistle,[1] that a bishop or a deacon of the Church must be 'not greedy of filthy lucre . . . not given to filthy lucre;' whereas of the false teachers foretold as to arise in the history of Christendom, who should 'privily bring in damnable heresies,' this, according to the latter Apostle, was to be one of the most prominent characteristics: 'And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.'[2] Now, as Paul in preaching the gospel had no such aim, he was under the less temptation to employ such arts.

'*Nor of men sought we glory, neither from you nor from others.*'[3]

On this the greatest of the Greek Fathers remarks: 'He says not that they were dishonoured, nor that they did not obtain honour—which were to have reproached them—but that they did not seek it.'[4] The emphasis, however, is properly extended by another to the words, '*of men.*' 'For,' says he, 'the glory that is from God they both sought and received.'[5] But, as the clause is arranged in the original, it seems to me to suggest still a third idea, thus: '*Nor sought we of men glory;*'—glory was not what we sought of men. We sought of them

[1] 1 Tim. 3: 3, 8; Tit. 1: 7; 1 Pet. 5: 2. [2] 2 Pet. 2: 1, 3.

[3] ἀπό . . . ἀπό.

[4] Chrysostom: οὐκ εἶπεν ὅτι ἠτιμάσθημεν, οὐδὲ ὅτι οὐκ ἀπελαύσαμεν τιμῆς, ὅπερ ἦν ὀνειδίζοντος αὐτούς· ἀλλ', οὐκ ἐζητήσαμεν.

[5] Oecumenius: τὴν γὰρ ἐκ Θεοῦ καὶ ἐζήτουν καὶ ἐλάμβανον.

faith in our message, and thankful submission and loving loyalty to Him who sent us.

The rest of the verse has been understood in two ways. '*When we might have been burdensome as Christ's apostles;*'[1]—burdensome, that is, either specially, in the assertion of our right to be supported by those to whom we ministered; or else generally, in the continual and unrestrained exhibition of our apostolic dignity and authority. Of these senses the former comes distinctly into view at the 9th verse, and is much less suited to the immediate context than the latter, which, accordingly, is preferred by the majority of interpreters, ancient and modern. You will find it indicated on the margin of your English Bible by the substitution of the words, '*used authority*,' for the words, '*been burdensome*.' And then the writer is to be understood as saying, that he had not sought glory of men—that he had not laboured to impress with awe the minds either of his brethren, or of their neighbours—by a careful putting forth of all the legitimate gravity, all the possible sternness and peremptoriness, of the apostolic office. On the contrary, as the sequel shows, his gentleness had been equal to his courage and his fidelity.

But, before leaving the negative statements of the 5th and 6th verses, and passing on to their positive counterpart in what follows, let it be confessed with

[1] Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι.

shame, that, when the sacred writer there speaks of flattering lips, of covetousness, and vain glory, and denies that his own work at Thessalonica had been vitiated by any of these things, he at the same time detects and exposes what soon proved to be main fountains of evil to the Church of God.[1] Nor is Christendom even yet allowed to forget this tendency of a corrupted clergy to gather into their own hands, and around the altars of the faith, the strength, and wealth, and splendour of nations. It is true that in the free, unendowed churches of our own land there is not a great deal to tempt the avarice, or the ambition, of a poor and dependent ministry. The danger with us rather is, that for the sake of a merely outward professional success, or a conspicuous position, or simply to keep ourselves and our families in bread, the Pulpit shall become the obsequious slave and cunning flatterer of the Pew, promptly and eagerly setting its little sail to every popular breeze that may be blowing, no matter whence or whither. Still you perceive, that even this statement of the case by no means exempts the American pastor from the possible taint of those baneful passions. In fact, there is no situation in life, high or low, in which every evil principle of our nature will not find scope for its own indulgence. The beggar on the dunghill may be a miser; Diogenes a lordly despot in his tub.

[1] Calvin: 'Quia ubi regnat avaritia aut ambitio, sequuntur innumerae corruptelae, ac totus homo in vanitatem effluit: duo enim sunt isti fontes ex quibus manat totius ministerii corruptio.'

And now let us advance in the exposition. '*But we were gentle among you*'—more literally, *were found*[1] *gentle in the midst of you.*[2] Here we have another indispensable qualification of every 'able minister of the New Testament.'[3] It is the spirit of the good Shepherd Himself, of whom Isaiah had prophesied that 'He should not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench He shall feed His flock like a shepherd'—one of the gentlest of human relations:—'He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.'[4] Similar to this had been His own language by Ezekiel: 'I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.'[5] What a vivid portraiture, brethren, is afforded by these prophetic descriptions, of 'the meekness and gentleness of Christ'![6] When in the fulness of time He appeared among us in the form of a servant, who cannot recognize the voice that had thus spoken to the heart of the ancient Church? 'I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.'[7] 'Come unto

[1] ἐγενήθημεν, as in ch. 1:5.

[2] ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν. Bengel: 'Sicut gallina pullis circumdata': 'like a hen surrounded by her chickens.'

[3] 2 Cor. 3:6. [4] Is. 42:2, 3; 40:11. [5] Ez. 34:15, 16.

[6] 2 Cor. 10:1. [7] John 10:11.

me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'[1]

Now this same spirit He requires in the under-shepherds, and authorizes no man to undertake the office of feeding His sheep and His lambs, in whose breast dwells not the sway of love. 'The servant of the Lord must not strive ; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves ; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth ; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.'[2] Gentleness is an essential characteristic of 'the wisdom that is from above ;'[3]—one of those 'fruits of the Spirit'[4] which all believers are bound to exhibit. But on the preacher of the word the cultivation of this grace is especially incumbent, not only as he is charged to 'be an example to the believers'[5] in all things, but also because, as the Apostle teaches in the passage I have just recited, it will be found most helpful to him in the right discharge of the duties of his office. In his case, indeed, there is no moral quality more obligatory or more becoming, when he considers at once his own weakness and imperfections, and the weakness and temptations of those to whom he ministers!

[1] Matt. 11 : 28–30. [2] 2 Tim. 2 : 24–26. [3] James 3 : 17.
[4] Gal. 5 : 22. [5] 1 Tim. 4 : 12.

Paul, then, was '*gentle*.' Nor does history, I think, furnish a more splendid exhibition of the union of the highest strength of character with the utmost gentleness —the deepest tenderness. Of him certainly it might be said, as it was said at the grave of John Knox, that he 'never feared the face of man.' How impetuous! how daring! at the very moment when Christ's glory smote him into the dust and into darkness, how furious and unrelenting in the prosecution of his own murderous scheme!—the very breath of him 'threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord'![1] And now behold him surrounded by these same disciples—how gentle!—all the vehemence and flame of his nature turned to love!—all its Alpine heights and ruggednesses, the home of the eagle and the storm, shining now in heaven's holy light—clothed with the softest verdure—and shedding down the plentiful waters of life, to revive the spirit of many a humble, weary wayfarer; yea, to refresh all earth's waste places, and make glad the City of God!

But observe his own beautiful language: '*Even as a nurse cherisheth her children.*' With these words you might, if you chose, and very many do, commence a new sentence, which is then continued through the 8th verse. Nor can it be said that our version does full justice to the Apostle's image. For the children, whom the nurse is supposed to cherish, are *her own children*, and the whole clause might be more exactly

[1] Acts 9 : 1.

rendered thus: *As a nurse would cherish*—warm and comfort in her bosom—*her own children.*[1] The writer is thinking of the patient care and unwearied assiduities of a nursing mother; than which this world surely presents no finer specimen of disinterested, laborious, self-sacrificing, gentle love—a love, which in all its ministrations by day and night, in health and sickness, is in no degree whatever prompted or sustained by selfish views of any kind, whether of gain or glory, but solely by a regard to the safety and welfare of its object. Such had been the Apostle's spirit, such his deportment, at Thessalonica. He had felt as Moses did in the wilderness, under the burden of all Israel, which God had laid upon him, saying: 'Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child.'[2] Indeed, the very figure of the text is that by which God Himself represents His own manner of love: 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.'[3]

In the next verse this illustration, drawn from the maternal spirit, is finely carried out: '*So being affectionately desirous of you*'—*being affectionately desirous;* the Greek for this is just one word,[4] which would perhaps be better given, if we should say: *Thus, yearning after you.* And you recollect how the same feeling breathes

[1] ὡς ἂν τροφὸς θάλπῃ τὰ ἑαυτῆς τέκνα. Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Alford, read ὡς ἐάν, *as if*, &c.

[2] Num. 11: 12. [3] Is. 66: 13. [4] ἱμειρόμενοι, or, as it is now read, ὁμειρόμενοι.

and burns in every Epistle. For example: 'O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.' And to the Galatians: 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.' And again to the Philippians: 'For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.'[1]

'*Thus, yearning after you, we were willing to impart unto you not only*[2] *the gospel of God*'—that cost us nothing. We but freely gave what we had freely received—'*but also*[2] *our own souls.*' The same word is forty times in our English Testament rendered *life—lives;* and so it is here by a great many. But it matters not which you prefer. '*We were willing to impart unto you our own souls also*' is really according to our idiom only a stronger way of saying: 'We were willing to give you every thing most dear to us, and keep nothing back, not even our lives.' And so, when we read: 'The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul,'[3] we have no difficulty in understanding what is meant. Just so it was that the soul of the Apostle clung to his converts. 'Our soul,' so Bengel paraphrases, 'longed to pass, as it were, into your soul.'[4] Or rather, as the nursing-mother ungrudgingly surrenders to her babe her own bodily strength and comfort, and the recreations of life, and

[1] 2 Cor. 6:11; Gal. 4:19; Phil. 1:8. [2] *οὐ μόνον . . . ἀλλὰ καί.*

[3] 1 Sam. 18:1. Compare Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, v. 4: '*Whose life's* as tender to me as *my soul.*'

[4] 'Anima nostra cupiebat quasi immeare in animam vestram.'

the refreshment of sleep, and her heart's blood also, shrinking not for its sake, when danger threatens, from flood or fire, even so could Paul have said to the Thessalonians as to the Corinthians: 'And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you;'[1] or to the Philippians: 'Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.'[2] In these and all similar cases his spirit was the same as when he poured forth his heart, in that address from which I have already quoted, to the weeping elders of Ephesus: 'But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.'[3]

These, brethren, were no idle words; not words uttered at random, or from ostentation, or barely from a sense of duty and official obligation. They were the warm, spontaneous, natural utterance of love—a love unforced, unbought, unfeigned—a yearning love—fervent love out of a pure heart, to the Redeemer of men and to the souls for which He died. '*We were willing to impart unto you . . . our own souls also, because ye were*'—or, *had become*[4]—'*dear unto us*'—dear as the trophies of my ministry—dear as now lovers and servants of my own glorious Lord—dear as my brethren in the household of faith, and my fellow-heirs in the coming kingdom. To use his own words in another place: 'Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for,

[1] 2 Cor. 12: 15. [2] Phil. 2: 17. [3] Acts 20: 24. [4] ἐγενήθητε.

my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.'[1] How like the rapturous reiterations of a nursing-mother's love! And yet, brave and tender as were all the words of Paul, we know that they were justified by the toils and sacrifices of his life, and sealed by the death of a martyr.

Such, then, was the fervour of ministerial affection in those primitive days. And it must still be the heart's desire and prayer to God of every faithful minister, that, according to his measure, he may be enabled to take the lesson to himself, and drink into the same Spirit. But remember, dear brethren, that this Spirit, which glows in the hearts of all Christ's true preachers, is none other than He who quickens every member of Christ's body, the Church. 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.'[2] The grand argument, that is, for the mutual love of Christians, as well as the glorious standard of that love, is the love that God hath, and hath so wondrously shown, to us all. Oh, believers, amidst our little, petty feuds, and jealousies, and coolnesses, and alienations, how humbling and overwhelming, yet how precious, and how constraining, is that inspired appeal: 'Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us.'[3] Can we be Christians, and still resist it?

[1] Phil. 4: 1. [2] 1 John 3: 16. [3] Eph. 5: 2.

LECTURE VII.

I. THESS. 2: 9, 10.—'For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.'

THESE verses, along with the 11th and 12th, complete the writer's description of his ministry at Thessalonica.

He had just spoken of his gentleness, and of his disinterested, self-sacrificing love, as of a nursing-mother to her children. And this he now illustrates and confirms in the 9th verse. '*For ye remember, brethren,*'—it was something you could not but be aware of at the time, and you cannot have forgotten it since—'*our labour and travail,*' or, *our toil and weariness;*[1] for the words have fully that force. His time had not been spent in holiday recreations, or social festivities, or even in what could scarcely be called more than a moderate, elegant exercise of mind and body. He had 'approved himself as the minister of God in labours'—'in labours more abundant.'[2] '*For,*' says he, '*labouring night and*

[1] τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον. [2] 2 Cor. 6:4, 5; 11:23.

day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God;' or, as this might be rendered somewhat more exactly, *working night and day, in order to the not burdening—that we might not burden—any one of you, we proclaimed unto you the gospel of God.* [1]

Paul's grand business, then, was, as an accredited herald of heaven's truth and grace, to *proclaim the gospel*—that gospel which comes from God, which reveals God, which alone leads the erring soul, an alienated world, back to God. And so earnestly, so exclusively, was this his business, that he made every thing else subsidiary to it, carefully avoiding whatever was likely to prove a hindrance, and shrinking from nothing that was likely to further the success of his mission. One notable instance of this is here adverted to.

In the ninth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians the writer shows at length, that not merely natural equity and the spirit of the Mosaic law, but a positive ordinance also of our Lord Christ requires, that, just as 'they which ministered about holy things lived of the things of the temple, and they which waited at the altar were partakers with the altar, even so . . . they which preach the gospel shall live of the gospel.' And yet in Corinth itself, to save himself and his work there from the damaging imputation of mer-

[1] ἐργαζόμενοι, πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαί τινα ὑμῶν, ἐκηρύξαμεν. The second γάρ (*for*) is now generally cancelled.

cenary motives, he thought good not to use 'his power in the gospel.' He waived his right 'to forbear working' and to be supported by the people, and found his reward in the very fact, that he thus 'made the gospel of Christ without charge.' Subsequently, indeed, in his Second Epistle to that church (ch. 12 : 13), he again refers to this abstinence of his as the only point of their inferiority to other churches, and as therefore a wrong on his part for which he asked their forgiveness.

We are not told what influence the calumnious malignity of his enemies may have had in previously inducing him to pursue the same course at Thessalonica. But, whatever were the circumstances of the case, he was doubtless governed by the same zeal for the gospel, and for the best interests of his brethren. We shall even find by-and-by, that in this church there were at work certain evil tendencies, which this apostolic example was intended, as it was well fitted, to correct.

And how, then, it may be asked, was the destitute preacher sustained during these generous, free ministrations at Thessalonica and at Corinth? The answer is: Not by miracle, nor by the secret visitation of angels, or of the raven that fed Elijah; but in both places, in part at least, by the kindness of 'other churches,' and especially by the abounding and unwearied liberality of his beloved Philippians. To the Corinthians he writes: 'I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to

no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.'[1] But in his dealings with the Philippians he did not feel himself at all embarrassed by these prudential restraints. Equally noble in his acceptance, and in his refusal, of temporal aid, he thus addresses the latter church: 'Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel'—that is, at its first introduction into Europe—'when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica'—or, *in Thessalonica also, before* I left the province—'ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.'[2]

It need not be supposed, however, that these occasional remittances were the principal means of the Apostle's support at such times. He appears to lay much greater and more frequent stress on his own manual labour, as what enabled him in any exigency to maintain his personal and ministerial independence. 'We labour,' or *toil*, he says, 'working with our own hands.'[3]

'It was a custom among the Jews,' we are told,[4] 'that all boys should learn a trade. "What is commanded of a father towards his son?" asks a Talmudic

[1] 2 Cor. 11: 8, 9. [2] Phil. 4: 15–17. [3] 1 Cor. 4: 12 (κοπιῶμεν).
[4] Howson; *Life and Epp. of St. Paul*, vol. I. p. 51.

writer. "To circumcise him, to teach him the law, to teach him a trade." Rabbi Judah saith, "He that teacheth not his son a trade, doth the same as if he taught him to be a thief;" and Rabban Gamaliel saith, "He that hath a trade in his hand, to what is he like? he is like a vineyard that is fenced." And if, in compliance with this good and useful custom of the Jews, the father of the young Cilician sought to make choice of a trade, which might fortify his son against idleness or against adversity, none would occur to him more naturally than the profitable occupation of the making of tents, the material of which was hair-cloth, supplied by the goats of his native province,. and sold in the markets of the Levant by the well-known name of *cilicium*.'

Of this very trade, accordingly, it would seem, the great Apostle of Christ never hesitated to avail himself, whenever thrown upon his own resources. Thus, as regards Corinth, we are told expressly that on his arrival there, 'finding a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, . . . he came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tent-makers.'[1] And again, in that exquisitely tender and solemn address to the Ephesian elders, from which I have already more than once drawn illustrations, he says himself: 'Yea, ye yourselves know, that these

[1] Acts 18 : 2, 3.

hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.'[1]

Now, at Thessalonica Paul's labours of this kind were peculiarly severe. Mark once more his language: '*For ye remember, brethren, our toil and weariness: for working night and day, that we might not burden any one of you, we proclaimed unto you the gospel of God.*' And this testimony he repeats in nearly the same words in the Second Epistle.

You perceive, therefore, that this lack of service on the part of the Thessalonians did not in the least abate Paul's interest in them, and love for them, or slacken his ministerial zeal; and that just because his object in preaching at all was not to secure a salary, or to escape the drudgery of common life. On the contrary, after spending the day in the various efforts of an earnest spiritual activity, he then toiled at his tent-making far into the silent night, and sometimes, it may be, until the gray dawn, that, having thus himself provided for his own frugal livelihood, he might on the morrow resume the blessed work of preaching, yea, preaching freely, the free gospel of God—pouring forth anew, 'without money and without price,'[2] before the wondering eyes of men, in the synagogue and throughout the city, on the streets and market-place, and from

[1] Acts 20 : 34, 35. [2] Is. 55 : 1.

house to house, the most precious of all God's gifts, Christ's 'unsearchable riches.'[1] Happy preacher, who so delighted in his work! Happy church, that did not disrelish nor disdain the message, because presented to her by the rough hand of a mechanic! How many, do you suppose, of our fashionable, or would-be fashionable, Christians, in city or country of this republican land of ours, would care to have a day-labourer for their pastor, even though he were endowed with all the truth and grace of an Apostle?

Of course, it were very absurd to infer from all this, that, to be like the apostolic times, churches nowadays must have day-labourers for their pastors, or even that the modern preacher may as well be left to eke out a scanty living from some secular employment. This were to make a rule for us out of what was avowedly exceptional with the Apostles themselves, 'in the beginning of the gospel,' on missionary ground, among churches newly gathered out of heathen darkness and pollutions, shaken by the violence of persecution, infested with rival teachers and with the artful misrepresentations of jealous Israel, themselves meanwhile either ignorant of, or as yet untrained to, the Lord's settled, gracious ordinance, 'that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.'[2] Similar circumstances, indeed, can readily be imagined still, which would justify, or require, a similar course on the part of the Christian evangelist. But nothing of this kind, it is

[1] Eph. 3 : 8. [2] Cor. 9 : 14.

obvious, can have the least legitimate effect in the way of abrogating, or so much as invalidating, the Divine statute law of Christendom—a law, brethren, not more equitable to the ministry, than it is full of blessing for the Church of God. Nor are there, I think, many surer signs of an effete, powerless, worthless church, than that it needlessly tramples on that law, and, with a preposterous meanness of injustice, accounts it not only 'a great thing,' but an unbearable thing, that the man who spends his life and strength in 'sowing unto her spiritual things, shall reap her carnal things.'[1]

In the next three verses the Apostle sums up, in still another appeal to the church and to God, the whole of the testimony he had already given, and desired yet to give, respecting his personal and official walk and conversation, while at Thessalonica.

'*Ye are witnesses, and God.*' No doubt, it was 'a very small thing' comparatively, that Paul should be 'judged of' the Thessalonians, 'or of man's judgment,' when 'He that judged him was the Lord.'[2] But these bold appeals to the people he had served in the gospel were of use for the conviction of their consciences, and for the manifestation of his own confident sincerity. There are many light and profane persons, who would really feel as if they were safer in a mock-heroic appeal to the invisible God, than to those with whom they daily associate. Paul felt very differently.

[1] 1 Cor. 9 : 11. [2] 1 Cor. 4 : 3, 4.

He felt—as his Lord had done before him, when amidst the revilings of men 'He committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously'[1]—that human testimony was the least and lowest witness he had on his side. Yet, for the reasons stated, he did not refuse to avail himself of it, just as Christ had referred to the testimony of the forerunner, on the ground of the former popular appreciation of him.[2]

'*Ye are witnesses, and God.*' It reminds one of that scene between all Israel and their 'old and gray-headed' prophet and judge, when Samuel came to them, and said: 'Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before His anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand. And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.'[3]

Equally essential was it, brethren, for Paul's peace, and safety, and reward, that he too should be able to extend the appeal to the throne of Him who is over all. It is therefore with a fine solemnity added: '*And God.*' Not only are 'the ways of man before the eyes of the

[1] 1 Pet. 2: 23. [2] John 5: 33–35. [3] 1 Sam. 12: 3–5.

Lord, and He pondereth all his goings,'[1] but, as the readers of the Epistle had just before been reminded, God 'trieth our hearts.' This, accordingly, is Paul's frequent and final boast. 'God is my witness.' 'We are made manifest unto God.' 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.'[2]

But for what purpose does he here summon his witnesses, so to speak, from earth and from heaven? It was to attest, as I said, first, his personal, and then his official, deportment at Thessalonica.

First, his personal: '*how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe;*'—'herein exercising myself,' as he said on another memorable occasion, 'to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.'[3] And again, in one of the Epistles: 'Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.'[4] So here he evidently intends to embrace within the range of his appeal the entire life of a Christian, in its relations both to God and man. Saving grace, he tells Titus, 'teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.'[5] This lesson, which Paul ever earnestly enforced on others, he had first learned himself; '*how holily*,' toward God, '*and justly*,'—or *righteously;* for

[1] Prov. 5 : 21. [2] Rom. 1 : 9; 2 Cor. 5 : 11; 11 : 31.
[3] Acts 24 : 16. [4] 2 Cor. 6 : 3. [5] Tit. 2 : 12.

it is the same word as in Titus—toward men, '*and unblameably*,' in every regard, '*we behaved ourselves.*'

But now observe what immediately follows: '*among you that believe.*' This '*among*' you naturally understand as meaning, *in your presence* or *society, in my intercourse with you.* But that can scarcely be what Paul means. His intercourse had been no less holy, and righteous, and unblameable among those who believed not. Very different, however, was the estimation of the man and his conduct within the church, and outside of it. Among the Gentiles he was blamed as a seditious disturber of the peace of society; among his own countrymen, as an apostate from Israel and Israel's God; among the false teachers of the day, as a despiser of the law, and on various other accounts. By the world at large he and his fellow-apostles were 'reviled . . ., persecuted . . ., defamed . . ., made as the filth of the world—the offscouring of all things;'[1] and from Thessalonica itself, as you remember, he had to flee by night before the fury of his enemies. Such, then, was the popular judgment regarding our Apostle among both Jews and Gentiles, at the very time when within the household of faith, the longer and better he was known, every Christian heart would the more readily and tenderly respond to Peter's affectionate mention of him, as 'our beloved brother Paul.'[2]

Now to all this, as I conceive, there is a covert, yet not obscure, reference in the words, '*among you that*

[1] 1 Cor. 4: 12, 13. [2] 2 Pet. 3: 15.

believe;' which have, indeed, the force of a limitation on the rest of the sentence, though of a kind that is not suggested to the English reader. The truth is, there is nothing in the original for our '*among*.' Rendered literally, and in the Greek order, the verse would stand thus: '*Ye are witnesses, and God, how holily, and righteously, and unblameably, for you who believed, we behaved ourselves.*' That is, We so appeared to you who believed, and as believers could understand the secret of our whole life, its aims and motives, its tendencies and issues. And this, I find, is also Calvin's interpretation. 'The servants of Christ,' says he, speaking too from a large personal experience, 'cannot escape calumnies and sinister rumours. For, since they are hated by the world, they must of necessity be evil spoken of by the wicked. Therefore he restricts this to believers, who judge rightly and sincerely, and do not maliciously and without cause detract.'[1]

[1] 'Calumnias enim et sinistros rumores vitare nequeunt Christi servi. Nam quum mundo exosi sint, apud improbos male audire necesse est. Ideo hoc ad credentes restringit qui recte et sincere judicant, non autem maligne obtrectant absque causa.'

LECTURE VIII.

I. Thess. 2 : 11, 12.—As ye know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *doth* his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory.

Having in the two preceding verses asserted, in the way of a confident appeal to the church and to God, the Christian consistency of his personal deportment at Thessalonica, he now submits, as it were, to a similar decision his official action likewise within the church itself. Only, since on this point his brethren were even more competent to testify than on the other, he says simply: '*As ye know*;' *even as—just as*.[1] That is to say, there had been an exact correspondence between the Apostle's own attainments in Christian character, and the earnestness of his efforts to promote similar attainments in them. What he practised, that he preached; insomuch that all his practical injunctions might have been summed up in one: 'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.'[2]

Let us now consider these two things; Paul's manner of dealing with his converts, and the grand burden and aim of all his varied modes of address.

[1] *καθάπερ*. See Hartung, *Lehre von den Partikeln*, i. 340.
[2] 1 Cor. 11 : 1.

I. First, his *manner of dealing with the converts.* It was one of great urgency, and impartial particularity, and was marked throughout with the mingled solicitude and gravity of a father.[1] '*Ye know how we exhorted, and*'—because to comply with the exhortation threatened manifold present perplexities and disasters—'*comforted,*' or *encouraged,*[2] '*and*'—not only so, but knowing the magnitude and solemnity of the interests at stake, as the honour and influence of the gospel, and your own spiritual furtherance and future reward—'*charged,*' or *obtested, adjured;*[3] for the word is a peculiarly strong one—very like, if not, as some think, the same as, that in the parallel Eph. 4 : 17, 'This I say therefore, and *testify*[4] in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.'

Such, then, was the variety and fervour of the Apostle's hortatory style. And it is interesting, in connection with his own description of it, to read what is recorded of him during a subsequent trip to the Macedonian churches—this of Thessalonica, no doubt, among the rest. He 'went,' it is said, 'over those parts, and *gave them much exhortation.*'[5] To secure the obedience of their faith to the gospel at the first, he had patiently

[1] Bengel: 'Temperata gravitas, patrum.'

[2] This sense of *παραμυθούμενοι* is required by its position between the other two participles, and by the relations which, along with them, it bears to the next verse.

[3] *μαρτυρούμενοι*; for which Bengel, Tischendorf, Alford and others, read *μαρτυρόμενοι.*

[4] *μαρτύρομαι.* [5] Acts 20 : 2.

laboured week after week in setting forth the truth and its evidence. So now, when he would have the believers illustrate their profession by their lives, he was little satisfied with a single, bare, didactic exhibition of duty and motive. Giving line upon line and precept upon precept, he strove to bring every power of persuasion to bear on the affections and the will. He was, what he required young Timothy to be, 'instant in season, out of season.' He did what he required Timothy and Titus to do; he 'taught and exhorted.' He 'reproved, rebuked, exhorted with all long-suffering and doctrine.' He 'spake, and exhorted, and rebuked with all authority.'[1]

The authority, however, was not that of a despot, or of one lording it over God's heritage, but '*as*' of '*a father*' among '*his children;*' so suffused was it and softened by a spirit of tenderness, and strenuous, loving zeal for their welfare and reputation, that was fitted to win, where mere authority might have failed to command. He felt toward them — he cared for them — he ever, in public and in private, spoke to them—as '*his own children,*'[2] whom 'in Christ Jesus he had begotten through the gospel.'[3]

And then you are to notice what I called the impartial particularity of these efforts: '*every one of you.*' Literally: '*Ye know how, as a father his own children, we exhorted you, each one of you, and encouraged, and ad-*

[1] 1 Tim. 6: 2; 2 Tim. 4: 2; Tit. 2: 15.

[2] τέκνα ἑαυτοῦ. [3] 1 Cor. 4: 15.

jured.' On which Chrysostom exclaims: 'Strange! among so many to omit not one, small or great, rich or poor.'[1] The explanation is, that he had a father's heart for them all, and how could he overlook any? how bear to think of even one of them, through unbelief or an unholy life, coming short of the kingdom, and proving at last a castaway? And therefore, as at Ephesus, he had taught them, not only publicly, but in their houses;[2] it may be, every family—if not every individual—apart.

II. And what was it, brethren—we must now inquire in the second place—what was it that so aroused all this pastoral energy of the Apostle in his intercourse with the believers of Thessalonica? You have the answer in the 12th verse: '*That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory.*' This, I say, was the one grand burden and aim of all his addresses. While testifying every where, and to all alike, 'repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,'[3] he was no less urgent and constant in promoting the sanctification of the Church. That great interest lay ever near his heart. From his prison at Rome we still hear the voice of 'Paul the aged' beseeching his brethren, 'that they walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called'—that their 'conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.'[4] And

[1] *βαβαὶ, ἐν τοσούτῳ πλήθει μηδένα παραλιπεῖν, μὴ μικρόν, μὴ μέγαν, μὴ πλούσιον, μὴ πένητα.*

[2] Acts 20: 20 (*κατ' οἴκους*). [3] Acts 20: 21.

[4] Philem. 9; Eph. 4: 1; Phil. 1: 27.

in his latest Epistle—the Second to Timothy—he expresses a sad foreboding of the perilous times of the last days, when the form of godliness should be left destitute of the power.

But look again at the phraseology before us: '*That ye should walk worthily of God, who hath called you unto*'—or *into*[1]—'*His own*[2] *kingdom and glory*'—the kingdom, that is, where He manifests His glory, and where the Church herself is glorified in the glory of her Lord. It is, then, you perceive, plainly implied here, that a '*walk worthy of God who hath called*' us into this kingdom of glory—in other words, a walk answerable to the Divine purpose in this call—is the highest attainment of the Christian life; and, moreover, that the very call furnishes a powerful—an adequate—motive for such a walk;—for a life like Paul's own at Thessalonica, 'holy, and righteous, and unblameable.'

Now, to understand this—that we may fully realize the truth and force of it—we must have some clear, Scriptural conceptions as to what is meant by the kingdom of God, or, according to the other names it bears, 'the kingdom of heaven,' 'the kingdom of God's dear Son,' 'the kingdom of Christ and of God.'[3] And this, brethren, is a theme of very large extent. Nothing less can be said of it, than that it embraces the entire scope at once of providence and of revelation. In these very Epistles the references to it are frequent and emphatic, and such as to indicate that it had formed one main

[1] εἰς. [2] ἑαυτοῦ. [3] Matt. 7: 21; Col. 1: 13; Eph. 5: 5.

topic of the Apostle's Thessalonian ministry. It is curious, accordingly, to find, on looking back to the historical record of that ministry, that the only charge urged against the preachers by the mob was just this, that their doctrine was revolutionary, tending to supersede the decrees of Cæsar by the authority of 'another king, one Jesus.'[1] Of course, to do any thing like justice to this great subject in a popular discussion would of itself require a considerable series of discourses. This I do not propose to undertake at present, but shall confine myself to a few brief hints essential to the interests of our general exposition, as to *what* the kingdom of God is—*when* it is—and *where* it is.

1. Know, then, my hearers, in the first place, that in the beginning all things were made, not only by, but for, the eternal, and only begotten, and well beloved Son of God—God 'having appointed Him heir of all things.'[2] And even after sin had entered, and death by sin, to defile and destroy the beauty and harmony of creation, insomuch that, to redeem the inheritance from the grasp of these usurpers, the Heir himself must now stoop to the sinner's low estate, the shame of the cross, and the humiliation of the grave, 'the mystery of the Father's will' was not thereby shaken, 'according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself, in the dispensation of the fulness of times to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.'[3]

[1] Acts 17 : 6, 7. [2] Heb. 1 : 2. [3] Eph. 1 : 9, 10.

Of this gracious purpose of God the very first intimation probably, that was given to any of the creatures, was made in the hearing of the father and mother of mankind, in the garden where they sinned and fell. 'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' [1]

With what rapidity and lustre the meaning of that solemn oracle evolved itself is known to such as know their Bibles; and how all the successive promises to Abraham and his race converged on the person of a coming King, and unfolded with an ever increasing brightness the might and splendour of His victorious and universal reign. Take, as a sample of the whole, what was revealed to one of the prophets of the captivity: 'And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. . . . I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.' [2]

In one respect, therefore, it was not any startling novelty, but merely the bursting forth anew of the

[1] Gen. 3: 15. [2] Dan. 2: 44; 7: 13, 14.

ancient and uniform strain of prophecy, when the voice of the Baptist was heard proclaiming in the wilderness of Judea: 'Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;'[1] or when Jesus himself 'went about all the cities and villages . . . preaching the gospel of the kingdom;'[2] or when 'He called His twelve disciples together . . . and sent them to preach the kingdom of God.'[3] And what is it but the reiteration and confirmation through Apostles 'of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy Prophets since the world began,'[4] when Paul, for instance, writes, under the same inspiration, of Christ 'putting down all rule and all authority and power . . . reigning, till He hath put all enemies under His feet'?[5] or when John in Patmos heard 'the seventh angel sound; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.'[6]

2. Such is the kingdom. And *when* is it? That is our second inquiry; and it too has been answered in some of the Scriptures that have already been cited. According to Daniel, it was to be set up in the days of the divided Roman empire; not therefore at our Lord's first coming, when that empire was yet whole and unbroken. And, according to John, that rapturous shout of heavenly voices awaits the sounding of the seventh

[1] Matt. 3 : 2. [2] Matt. 9 : 35. [3] Luke 9 : 1, 2.
[4] Acts 3 : 21. [5] 1 Cor. 15 : 24, 25. [6] Rev. 11 : 15.

angel. And to this same conclusion, of the still future revelation of the kingdom of God, all Scripture unanimously points. The Apostle James expressly calls it, 'the kingdom which God hath *promised* to them that love Him.'[1] And Paul himself did not expect it till the 'appearing'[2] of Jesus Christ. Even here in the text he associates it with '*glory*.'

It is, indeed, true that at this moment our Lord 'is set down with His Father in His throne.' But it is also true, that that throne of the Father is expressly distinguished from the Mediator's own throne.[3] It is not that 'throne of His glory' on which the Son of man shall sit, only when He 'comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him.' Nor until 'then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'[4]

Jesus, again, is even now the rightful King of all the earth. But I speak of a time when He shall be King in fact, as well as in law; a time, when His royalty shall not be thus spurned and set at nought by the nations and their rulers. Ah, brethren, if Christ be our 'Master, where is His fear?'[5] Where shall we find, I do not say, the country—but where shall we find the church in any country—or the family in any church—or the single soul in any family—in which the authority of God's Anointed is not daily resisted, or forgotten? Go, fill

[1] James 2: 5. [2] 2 Tim. 4: 1.
[3] Rev. 3: [4] Matt. 25: 31, 34. [5] Mal. 1: 6.

the world with such churches, and the churches with such families, and the families with just such Christians as we are—and have we the heart to call *that* the earth's latter day glory? *that* the jubilee rest of a groaning and travailing universe? *that* the light in whose effulgence 'the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign'?[1] Is *that* the spectacle, on which the eye of faith has been gazing with rapture from the depths of primeval time? which even now stirs with the energy of a strong desire the souls reposing beneath the altar, and animates the intercession of the great High Priest within the veil? God forbid, that I should 'offend against the generation of His children,'[2] or disparage His goodness in the present dispensation of His grace! But sure I am, that God's best servants will not be the most backward to confess, and deplore, their manifold weaknesses and defilements —the awful prevalence of worldliness—of Christlessness—within the Church's pale, in the hearts and lives of professors. And then, if we look abroad, where shall we escape from the din of lawlessness, the sound of blasphemies, the shrieks of anguish, that come up from all earth's 'dark places'?[3]

No, no; 'we see not yet all things put under'[4] the Man Christ Jesus. Not yet do we behold God's '*kingdom and glory*.' The utmost that can be said of it is, that it is coming—that it is near—and that we look for it. Still it remains what it was in the hour

[1] Is. 24:23. [2] Ps. 73:15. [3] Ps. 74:20. [4] Heb. 2:8.

of the first gospel, spoken in Paradise—what it was in the days of Abraham, and David, and Daniel, and Paul, and John—the subject at once of promise, and of prayer. 'Our Father which art in heaven . . . Thy kingdom come!'

Some of you, it is very possible, have been thinking all this while of certain difficulties in the way of this view of the futurity of the kingdom of God. Of the objections that might be made to it, I shall here notice only one.

Are there not passages, it may be said, in which such phrases as *the kingdom*, *the kingdom of heaven*, are used of the spiritual elements that are found in connection with, and the Divine plan that pervades, the existing economy of human affairs? Undoubtedly there are a few such passages—much fewer than the objector commonly imagines. But, when they are adduced in opposition to the mass of evidence, that goes to restrict the glorious development of the kingdom to a dispensation yet future, the answer is easy and obvious.

Those spiritual elements—'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost'[1]—and that Divine plan of 'bringing many sons unto glory' by 'the Captain of salvation,'[2] are by no means peculiar to the Christian economy, but are common to it with the antediluvian, the patriarchal, and the Mosaic economies, which were all of them, therefore, together with these Gentile times, so many successive stages in the Church's mys-

[1] Rom. 14 : 17. [2] Heb. 2 : 10.

terious ascent to the City of God. But let not the Church mistake these inns, or tabernacles, even the best of them, for her final and everlasting home. Call them, if you will, the steps of the throne ; but remember that they derive their chief value from the relation they bear to that. If they are spoken of at all as part of the throne, it is because they conduct thither. The man who takes a grain of mustard seed, and casts it into his garden, may describe the process in terms drawn from the expected result, and say that he has planted a tree whose boughs reach to heaven, and cover the earth with their shadow. And, in the indulgence of a like anachronism, the pioneers of society, as they open their first rude clearings in some leafy wilderness, might be styled citizens of the future, populous, and fertile, and well-ordered commonwealth. Even so, the kingdom of grace, that divines speak of, is a very different thing from the kingdom of glory, of which Prophets and Apostles speak. If the former sometimes receives even in Scripture the royal designation, it is principally on account of its manifold and momentous bearings on the ultimate organization of the latter. Every plant, that is now planted by the Divine Husbandman in this ungenial clime, shall there unfold its incorruptible life by the river of God. Every blow here struck for Christ—every act of endurance and self-denial for His sake and the gospel's—every cup of water given in the name of a disciple—every tear of penitence—every prayer of faith—every aspiration of hope—every labour of love—

is a seed of glory, disregarded by the world, ofttimes forgotten by the saint himself, but never unnoticed, never forgotten, by God, and it shall be 'found unto praise,'[1] at Christ's 'appearing and kingdom.'

3. But let us pass on to our third point, which regarded the *locality* of this kingdom. *Where* are we to look for it? We already know that 'His kingdom ruleth over all.'[2] But we now inquire, Where shall be, so to speak, its seat of empire? Where the Court, the Throne, the residence of the King?

I answer, Not in the sun, nor in the moon, nor in the stars, nor in that bright stranger,[3] whose banner now blazes in the evening sky, nor yet in any of the pathless wildernesses, to which he and his peers have never wandered; but in the 'new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,' and for which, says Peter, 'we look, according to His promise.'[4]

For that the earth itself, redeemed at last from Satan and the curse, is to share largely in the glory of the kingdom, is the testimony of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. And you will allow me to add that to my own faith it is no less certain, that in that glory of the terrestrial—as distinguished from the glory of the celestial, which is the peculiar portion of the Church, the Lamb's Wife—a preëminence is reserved for the restored and pardoned nation of Israel—for the land of

[1] 1 Pet. 1 : 7.
[2] Ps. 103 : 19.
[3] The Comet of Oct., 1858.
[4] 2 Pet. 3 : 13.

Israel, Immanuel's own land[1]—and for Jerusalem, 'the City of the Great King.'[2]—But on these matters, however interesting, I must not now enlarge.

Into this, '*His own kingdom and glory*,' then, '*God*,' says the Apostle, '*hath called you*,' or rather, *calleth you*;[3] for it is precisely the same form that is so rendered in the 24th verse of the 5th chapter: 'Faithful is He that calleth you.' 'Let, therefore, this call of God,' as if he had said, 'be ever sounding in the ear, ever stirring the heart and life, of the Church; even as I press toward the mark for the prize of the same high calling.'

That prize, dear brethren, is the 'crown of righteousness'—'the crown of life'—the 'crown of glory'[4]—in the '*kingdom and glory*' of our God. Your calling, equally with that of the Thessalonians, is to be, not so much subjects in the kingdom as its 'royal priesthood'—'kings and priests unto God and the Father'—joint-heirs of all things with Christ, the 'King of kings, and Lord of lords,' to each and all of whom He 'will grant to sit with Him in His throne.'[5]

Having this hope, dearly beloved, let us 'purify ourselves, even as He is pure.' Yea, 'seeing that ye look for such things . . . what manner of persons ought ye

[1] Is. 8 : 8. [2] Matt. 5 : 35.
[3] καλοῦντος. [4] 2 Tim. 4 : 8; James 1 : 12; 1 Pet. 5 : 4.
[5] 1 Pet. 2 : 9; Rev. 1 : 6; Rom. 8 : 17; Rev. 19 : 16; 3 : 21.

to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God?' 'Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.' 'Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.'[1]

[1] 1 John 3 : 3; 2 Pet. 3 : 11, 12, 14 (*σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν*); Heb. 12 : 28; Rev. 3 : 11.

LECTURE IX.

I. THESS. 2: 13–16.—'For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.'

IN the preceding verses of this chapter the writer describes his own life and ministry at Thessalonica. In the verses now before us he repeats the testimony which he had already borne, in the latter half of the first chapter, to the blessed result of his labours. And, as in the former instance he had appealed largely to the Thessalonians themselves, so here he speaks with no less confidence from his own personal recollection.

'*For this cause*'—such being my great zeal for your sanctification;—or perhaps: such being the glorious purpose of God in the gospel call—'*we, also, thank God without ceasing*'—an arrangement of the words,

which better brings out the emphasis on the *we*, and its designed opposition, as I conceive, to the emphatic *ye* of v. 10. As if he had said: '*Ye* are my witnesses, and now *I* am yours.'[1] Blessed is the minister, and blessed is the church, when there not only exist between the two parties these strong sentiments of mutual confidence and affectionate esteem, but these personal regards rest on grounds so substantial and enduring as in the present instance.

'*We, also, thank God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard from*[2] *us, ye received*'—or, *accepted, embraced;* for the word is not the same as in the preceding clause, but a much stronger one[3]—'*not men's word, but, as it is in truth, God's word.*'[4] The immediate ground of apostolic thankfulness was, that the Thessalonians had accepted a word which was not human, but Divine. In this, however, it is no doubt implied, that, at the time and in the manner of their acceptance, they had manifested *their* appreciation of the difference.

Observe, then, that the word which Paul preached, and the Thessalonians accepted, was not men's word, but truly God's; and the same 'is the word, which by the gospel is preached unto you.'[5] It is the voice of

[1] Zanchius explains thus: 'Not you alone ought to give thanks for this calling, but we also.' Lünemann thus: 'We, as well as every true Christian that hears of your deportment.' Alford thus: 'We, as well as all believers in Macedonia and Achaia; ch. 1: 7.'

[2] παρά. [3] ἐδέξασθε; as in ch. 1: 6.

[4] λόγον ἀνθρώπων . . . λόγον Θεοῦ. [5] 1 Pet. 1: 25.

God—the very breath, so to speak, of His infinite essence—in itself, therefore, a higher, more Divine thing, than any product of creative power. 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.'[1] But mightier far is the word by which a lost world is redeemed. This is the 'word' that He hath 'magnified above all His name,'[2] as displaying at once the exceeding greatness of His power, the resources of His manifold wisdom, and the blended glories of His holiness and love. At sundry times and in divers manners it was spoken unto the fathers by the prophets—'holy men of God speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost'—and in these last days it has been spoken by God Himself through His Son—and, when the gracious words that proceeded from the lips of Jesus were 'confirmed unto us by them that heard Him,'[3] they too spake and wrote under the same strong and infallible impulse and guidance; insomuch that whosoever received an Apostle, in the spirit of an obedient faith in his message, might with equal and even greater propriety be said to receive Christ that sent him.[4]

Now it was just thus that the Thessalonians welcomed the word that Paul brought to them. They received it for what it was, and in such a way as befitted what it was—a direct emanation from the Eternal Mind; not therefore as of human origin and authority,

[1] Ps. 33: 6.
[2] Ps. 138: 2.
[3] Heb. 1: 1, 2; 2: 3.
[4] Matt. 10: 40.

or as introducing them to some new school of heathen philosophy, or of Jewish tradition. They received it as Moses did the tables of the law from the outstretched hand of Jehovah; or as the young, wakeful prophet in the temple listened to the voice calling him through the night watches. Yea, they received it, as we are told the Galatians also did, 'even as Christ Jesus'[1]—with the same sort of welcome that ever awaited the Man of sorrows, when in the cool of the day He walked over Olivet and presented Himself in the humble home of Lazarus and his two sisters;—with profoundest reverence; with holy awe; with an implicit, unreplying submission alike of the understanding and the will; 'gladly,'[2] like the hearers of Pentecost. The word of God 'was found' of them, and they 'did eat' it, 'and the word was unto them the joy and rejoicing of their heart.'[3]

For you will mark now the efficacy of the word so received: '*which also worketh*'[4]—the Divine word becoming a Divine energy—'*in you that believe*.' For, as without faith it is impossible for a man in the hearing of the word to please God, so likewise to be profited by it himself. 'The word preached,' says the Apostle in another place, 'did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.'[5] To the believer alone is the word of God 'the power of God unto salvation.'[6]

[1] Gal. 4: 14. [2] Acts 2: 41. [3] Jer. 15: 16.

[4] καὶ ἐνεργεῖται. The '*effectually*' of our version seems to come to us through the Bishops' Bible (*effectuously*) from Calvin (*efficaciter*).

[5] Heb. 11: 6; 4: 2. [6] Rom. 1: 16.

To every one else it is a thing of quite another sort. It has then no power but that which is common to it with the law—the power to convince, to irritate, to harden, to condemn. Its salutary operation is confined to the believing soul. There only the incorruptible seed of the kingdom takes root, and brings forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. By the same word of truth, that quickens the sinner, the people of God are strengthened, comforted, sanctified, and not only conducted, but 'afore prepared, unto glory.'[1]

Now in all this, as illustrated by the experience of the Thessalonians, Paul saw a fit occasion for unceasing thanksgiving to God. The word itself was God's. The faith of the Church was also His gift. And no less did the subsequent energy of the word believed manifest His power and grace.

The 14th verse contains the evidence of what had just been asserted.

'*For ye, brethren, became followers*'—or, *imitators*[2]—'*of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus.*' The same thing had been expressed in the first chapter by saying: 'Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord.' For at the head of the long line is the Son of God himself, the Captain of salvation. But all whom He leads to glory walk in His steps, and so become followers one of another. Each successive group, as it advances through the wilderness, 'looking unto

[1] Rom. 9: 23. [2] As in ch. 1: 6.

Jesus,'[1] is enabled also to trace, in many a monumental stone, the memorials of the faith and patience of their predecessors, and seems oftentimes to catch the very echo of their ancient and immortal songs. Nor would the Apostle have us forget, that of all these memorials the earliest and the most august were reared by Jewish hands, and that they were Jewish voices which first chanted the praises of our Redeemer. '*Ye became followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus.*'

The rest of the verse singles out one feature of this general conformity. '*For ye also have suffered like things*'—or, *For ye also suffered the same things—'from your own countrymen, even as they from the Jews.*'[2] This, you will notice, is introduced in proof of the consistency of their Christian walk, and as therefore illustrating the effectual operation of the gospel, when received as a Divine message. They had 'received the word in much affliction.' They counted it worth suffering for; and it enabled them to suffer.

Doubtless, it was just the energy of their faith, that stirred up the wrath of their adversaries. With a dead faith the world has no quarrel, for it is not itself disturbed, but rather is kept in countenance, by it. The formalist 'sleeps, as do others.'[3] If there be any difference, it is only that he takes the Bible for his pillow.

[1] Heb. 12: 2.

[2] *ταὐτα* (according to the now received reading, *τὰ αὐτὰ*) *ἐπάθετε—ὑπό—ὑπό.*

[3] Ch. 5: 6.

But I know not, brethren, on what grounds we are entitled, in any age or country, to ignore as now obsolete and inapplicable that saying of primitive times, so largely exemplified in their experience: 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus'—and will not be contented with a lifeless profession of godliness—'shall suffer persecution.'[1] It is no more than our blessed Lord forewarned us of, one and all: 'In the world ye shall have tribulation'—tribulation, that is, arising from the world's hostility. And you may have remarked that, when on another occasion He set himself to comfort His disciples under the loss of all things for His name's sake, it was in these faithful words He did it: 'Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands'—in other words, abundant compensation even in this world for the very things lost; but it is added—'*with persecutions;*' which is as much as to say: 'Exemption from these cannot possibly form any part of that present compensation of my followers; only, as my sufferings shall abound in them, so their consolation also shall abound by me. In me they shall have peace.'[2] If we, therefore, brethren, have never yet in any form, or to any extent, suffered for Christ, do we not lack one of the most important, and for that

[1] 2 Tim. 3: 12. [2] John 16: 33; Mark 10; 29, 30; 2 Cor. 1: 5.

reason one of the most desirable, credentials of our faith in Him?

You perceive, at any rate, that this solemn seal of discipleship was not wanting to the believers at Thessalonica. This was one of those churches of Macedonia, of whose 'great trial of affliction' the Apostle wrote years afterwards to the Corinthians.[1] And even thus early they had '*suffered the same things from their own countrymen, even as they*'—the churches in Judea—'*from the Jews.*'

In the seventeenth chapter of the Acts is recorded the first outburst of violence against the disciples. But that was only the beginning of trouble. The language of Paul here and elsewhere compels us to believe, that the trial of their faith presently waxed hotter and hotter, while it still served only the more gloriously to attest its security and strength. It is expressly declared that they had suffered just as their brethren in Judea had suffered; and there, we know, the persecuting fury had already rushed to all lengths of relentless and bloodthirsty ferocity.

Of this the Thessalonians are reminded by the terrible detail of the next two verses; where the writer's object seems to have been the more effectually to obviate the scandal of the cross, arising at once from the Jewish rejection of the gospel and from the tribulations of the Church, by showing that it was no strange

[1] 2 Cor. 8: 2.

trial that had befallen the believers at Thessalonica—that they had only been called to enter into 'the fellowship of Christ's sufferings,'[1] and of the sufferings of the most eminent servants of God in every age;—sufferings, moreover, inflicted by the blind zeal of that same covenant people. From the beginning until now, the race, which had been so favoured of heaven, had 'always resisted the Holy Ghost.'[2] It was not more characteristic of Jerusalem's history, that God 'sent unto her all His servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them,' than it was that she 'killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto her.' 'It cannot be,' said her own Lord and Redeemer, 'that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.' 'Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers;'[3]—such was the unanswerable challenge and charge of Christ's protomartyr, as with the face of an angel he turned at bay upon his pursuers, and thrust them through the heart with the Spirit's flaming sword.

The very same tone of faithful testimony marks the present passage. '*Who both*,'—or, *who also*;[4] that is, in the indulgence of just the same evil spirit as that they

[1] Phil. 3: 10. [2] Acts 7: 51.
[3] Jer. 7: 25; Luke 13: 33; Acts 7: 52.
[4] The accumulation of charges renders improper the other rendering of *καὶ*, when construed with the participle. If translated *both*, it must belong to *τὸν Κύριον*: '*who killed both Jesus*' &c.

now manifest toward the Church — '*killed Jesus the Lord*[1] *and their own*[2] *prophets*'—the very men whose sepulchres they build and garnish, and in whose words they profess to glory,[3]—'*and persecuted us*'—*chased* or *drove us out*, as ye know, from Thessalonica[4] as pestilent disturbers of the world's peace,—'*and they please not God*,' however much they profess to be zealous for His glory. But, as of old He destroyed their fathers in the wilderness, even so now at this present time also He is turning to be their enemy, and will fight against them.[5] Meanwhile, alas, unobservant or regardless of these portents of a terrible doom, now gathering and darkening all the heavens, poor Israel wraps himself in his fancied security, and, bristling all over with a stubborn and contemptuous nationality, is '*contrary to all men*.'

This bitter and exclusive temper of the Jew of that period was most strikingly shown, as the Apostle then intimates,[6] in his fierce resistance to the calling of the

[1] So Alford represents the positional emphasis in τὸν Κύριον ἀποκτεινάντων Ἰησοῦν.

[2] Many editors now drop the word ἰδίους.

[3] Chrysostom: ὧν καὶ τὰ τεύχη περιφέρουσι: 'whose very books they now parade.'

[4] This special reference seems to be implied in the historical time of ἐκδιωξάντων.

[5] Is. 63: 10.

[6] The omission of the copula καί (*and*) at the beginning of v. 16 shows, that the last clause of the preceding verse is not so much directed independently and in general against 'the morose and unsocial bigotry of the Jews respecting all Gentiles' (Scott)—the *adversus omnes alios hostile odium* of Tacitus—of which the heathen, indeed, often complained, but which, at least in some of its supposed manifestations, would be differently regarded by a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

Gentiles into the fellowship of the gospel, while he himself despised and rejected it:—'*forbidding us*'—or by every means in their power *hindering*[1] *us*—'*to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved.*' A very large portion of the book of Acts, you are aware, is taken up with the exemplification of this abominable animosity—this hardened and preposterous wickedness alike toward God and toward man. No wonder that it should have proved to be, what Paul here calls it, the '*filling up of their sins alway;*' or that, as in the case of Sodom and the Amorites, this consummation of guilt was of itself the sure token of inevitable and consuming wrath. The Apostle, therefore, speaks, as in the prophetic style,[2] of wrath already executed: '*for the wrath*'—or, *but*[3] *the wrath;* that is, although the patience of God bore with them so long, *nevertheless*, at last, and in the face of all their wicked efforts, *the wrath*, long threatened, long delayed, and by reason of that delay the more accumulated and overwhelming—'*is come upon*

[1] κωλυόντων.

[2] To account for the past time of ἔφθασε (*came*), Lünemann lays undue stress on the distinction between *wrath* and its manifestation in actual *punishment*. Alford thinks that the writer 'looks *back* on the fact in the divine counsels as a thing in past time, q. d. "was appointed to come:" not "has come."' It is simpler to say, that the ἔφθασε rests on the ἀναπληρῶσαι. If the latter is, or may be conceived of as, historical, then so also the former. Compare Matt. 12:28: 'If it be a *fact*, that I am working these miracles by a Divine power, then another *fact*, in which you profess to feel a deep interest, must *already have happened*, little as you were aware of it; the kingdom of God *came* (ἔφθασε) upon you.' Such a use of the aorist, however, is rather Greek than English.

[3] δέ.

them.' There is nothing now between it and them. It has not yet burned itself out; but, behold, it is kindled, and cannot be quenched. Israel's great tribulation now begins its destroying course, and nothing can arrest it. 'These be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.'[1]

The words *to the uttermost* are literally, *unto* or *for an end*,[2] and no doubt mark the issue, scope, or limit, of the wrath that now lighted on unbelieving, persecuting Israel; that limit being either the end, consummation, exhaustion, of the wrath itself,[3] or, according to the common explanation, the end and utter destruction of the objects of it. Some of the Fathers[4] seem to have understood the clause as announcing, that the Jewish desolation should continue unto the end of the world.

From our review of these verses we may learn, brethren,

1. In the first place, *what the true business is of the gospel ministry.*

It is to preach 'the word of God'—to preach it as the word of God—to preach it just as God has spoken it—and, even in preaching the pure word of God, to do

[1] Luke 21: 22.

[2] εἰς τέλος. Some make this qualify ἡ ὀργή: *extreme wrath*, or *final* wrath. Others take it adverbially: *has come at last*, or *has come thoroughly, utterly.*

[3] Olshausen, Lünemann, Alford.

[4] As Chrysostom and Jerome, cited by Penn, who adopts the same view.

it as it becometh the oracles of God, with all simplicity, and gravity, and earnestness, avoiding utterly 'the enticing words of man's wisdom,'[1] and every other species of ostentatious trickery, whereby the Divine majesty of truth is degraded and obscured.

2. Secondly, learn *what a serious matter it is to be brought under the responsibility of a hearer of the gospel.*

The gospel is 'the word of God.' And you know with what passionate outcries, as under a heavy burden, or as at a fire in their bones, or as if they would wake the dead, Prophets and Apostles, to whom the lively oracles were first committed, came forth from the secret place of God's presence: 'O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!'[2] They realized much better than we do the greatness of the provocation, if, when He calls, no man regardeth; if, when He speaks to us from heaven, the worms of the dust turn away from him. The day is coming, my hearers, that will declare how damning a sin unbelief is, and ought to be, in the sight of God. Beware how you consent, any of you, to live day after day—it may be, at such an hour as ye think not, to die—under this sore condemnation.

3. Again, what a humiliating and, for such as love to glorify our fallen nature, what a perplexing fact is it, that *hatred of the gospel*, its truth, its holiness, its professors, *is the common sentiment of unrenewed man*—of

[1] 1 Cor. 2 : 4. [2] Jer. 22 : 29.

the Jew and the Gentile alike—insomuch that, in sending forth that gospel among all nations, our Lord sent not peace on earth, 'but a sword'—yea, a 'fire,' in which the natural charities of kindred and country have often perished, and a man's foes have been 'they of his own household!'[1]

4. In the next place, you may learn from the c·. especially of the Jew, that *the largeness and preciousness of our religious privileges afford not even a presumption in favour of the likelihood of a suitable improvement of them, and a corresponding result.*

Nay, the history of other days, without a single exception, would lead us to expect, in the absence of some express intimation to the contrary, that in the case of the present dispensation, as with every other that has gone before it, the amount of our privileges is to be the measure rather of our guilt and ruin. But not only is there no hint in the New Testament of this dispensation being about to interrupt the analogy of all past time; the plain fact is that, on almost every page, the New Testament teems with evidence of the very opposite result. If the Apostle here speaks of wrath having come upon impenitent Israel, he speaks elsewhere, throughout these very Epistles, of wrath that is now coming on an unbelieving world, and on apostate Christendom. 'If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee.'[2] Nowhere—nowhere—will that wrath alight with such a consuming

[1] Matt. 10: 34, 36; Luke 12: 49. [2] Rom. 11: 21.

flame, as on the despiser of the blood of the Son of God, and the unworthy confessor of His name.

5. Learn, moreover, to *stand in awe of God's method of dealing with transgressors.*

He does not hasten His 'strange work' of judgment. The sentences of His righteous indignation are 'not executed speedily.' He gives space for repentance, and never strikes until iniquity is full. We may well admire this 'goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering' of God, who hath no pleasure in the death of the sinner, and is not willing that any should perish.[1] But, while gratefully adoring this patience of the Almighty, let us also, I repeat, stand in awe of it. Who knoweth, sinner, how nearly full is the cup of thine own sins? Who knoweth but this one misspent and prayerless Sabbath may be the very drop, for which God has been waiting these many years—the drop that is to cause thy cup to overflow into the fire of His anger, which shall then burn up around thee, and none shall quench it?

6. But learn, lastly, you who profess to be followers of the Thessalonians, as they followed the churches of Judea, learn *how you may safely determine, whether your faith in the gospel is such as may be expected to come forth from that last fiery trial, and then 'be found unto praise, and honour, and glory.'*[2]

[1] Is. 28 : 21; Eccl. 8 : 11; Gen. 15 : 16; Rom. 2 : 4; Ez. 33 : 11.
[2] 1 Pet. 1 : 7.

Is it a working faith? effectually working in your own heart and mind 'all the good pleasure of God's goodness,'[1] and then working by you 'the peaceable fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God?'[2] God grant that in that day we may all be found to have been 'doers of the word, and not hearers only.'[3]

[1] 2 Thess. 1 : 11. [2] Heb. 12 : 11; Phil. 1 : 11. [3] James 1 : 22.

LECTURE X.

I. THESS. 2 : 17–20.—'But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us. For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy.'

WE here enter on another section of the Epistle, in which the writer gives free utterance to the sentiments of solicitude and longing desire, occasioned by his recent separation from the church—mentions his own repeated, but abortive, efforts to revisit Thessalonica—expresses his joy and thankfulness at the good report finally brought by Timothy—and closes with devout prayer, for himself, that he may yet be allowed to see his Thessalonians once more; and for them, that their love may be enlarged, and their holiness perfected in the day of Christ.

The section reaches to the end of the third chapter, which, it is obvious, should have embraced also the four verses now before us.

'*But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short*

time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.'

He had just declared his parental interest in them, and affection for them; and then he had spoken of their great sufferings for the sake of that gospel which they had learned of him. How, then, could he bear to be absent from them in this their day of trial? Was it enough for Paul, that through their kindness he had been enabled to escape from the dangers, which he had been instrumental in arousing against them? Or, in the occupations and excitements of new scenes, had he altogether lost sight of them? It was apparently to preclude the rise of any such suspicions, that the present statement was made. And you will observe, that the manner in which it is made is singularly—we might say, elaborately—emphatic.

'*But we, brethren*'—whilst *you* (v. 4) were thus suffering for our common faith, what became of us?—*we, brethren,* '*being taken from you,*'—literally, *orphaned of you.*[1] The word is a very strong one, and occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly expresses the being reduced to a state of orphanage, and is here transferred to represent the Apostle's sense of bereavement in his enforced separation from his spiritual children. His emotions were like those of Jacob: 'If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.'[2] 'He says not,' remarks one of the Greek Fathers,[3]

[1] *ἀπορφανισθέντες ἀφ' ὑμῶν.* [2] Gen. 43: 14.

[3] Chrysostom (*Ep.* ii. *ad Olymp.* 12.): *οὐδὲ γὰρ εἶπε, χωρισθέντες ὑμῶν, οὐδὲ διασπασθέντες ὑμῶν, οὐδὲ διαστάντες, οὐδὲ ἀπολειφθέντες*

'*parted from you*, or *torn from you*, or *distant*, or *absent*, but *orphaned of you*. He sought for a word that might fitly indicate his mental anguish. Though standing in the relation of a father to them all, he yet utters the language of orphan children that have prematurely lost their parent.'

The addition, '*for a short time*,' or *for the space of an hour*,[1] seems to be susceptible of different explanations. Thus, the writer may be understood as stating that, scarcely had he left Thessalonica, when these feelings of loneliness and desolation set in, impelling him to immediate attempts to return. Or he may have spoken according to his own desire and hope, that the separation itself would be of short duration.[2] Nay, it is quite possible that the eye of faith may have glanced onward to a speedy reunion in the coming kingdom of our Lord. Whensoever Christians part, though it be at the entrance of death's dark valley, they are entitled to say: 'In a short time—yet a little while—and we shall meet again.'

But, however short the interval, the Apostle was ill at ease while it lasted. And the reason was that, with-

ἀλλ' ἀπορφανισθέντες ὑμῶν. λέξιν ἐζήτησεν ἱκανὴν ἐμφῆναι τὴν ὀδύνην αὐτοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς. καίτοιγε ἐν τάξει πατέρος ἦν ἅπασιν αὐτὸς, ἀλλὰ παιδίων ὀρφανῶν ἐν τῇ ἀώρῳ ἡλικίᾳ τὸν γεγεννηκότα ἀποβαλόντων φθέγγεται ῥήματα.

[1] *πρὸς καιρὸν ὥρας.*

[2] To this Lünemann objects the grammatical relation of the participle, *having been bereaved*, to the past tense of the verb, *we endeavoured*. But the objection, though adopted by Alford, is by no means conclusive.

drawn from the church in bodily presence, in his heart he still fondly clung to it. '*Having been bereaved of you for a short time in presence, not in heart.*' The distinction was a familiar one in Paul's experience, and it meets us again and again in his Epistles. To the Corinthians he writes of being 'absent in body, but present in spirit;' and in nearly similar terms to the Colossians.[1]

So far, however, was this continual remembrance of his friends from satisfying the Apostle, or reconciling him to his temporary absence, that it served rather to sharpen his regrets, and deepen his longings. We '*the more abundantly endeavoured*[2] *to see your face with great desire.*' This might, indeed, have reference to the afflictions and perils of the church; as if he had said: 'Instead of being deterred by our knowledge of what ye were suffering for the gospel's sake, we so much the more abundantly endeavoured to return, that we might share your sorrows, and help you to bear them, while we mingled our tears with yours.'[3] Or perhaps, as I

[1] 1 Cor. 5: 3; Col. 2: 5. [2] The order of the Greek.

[3] Lünemann thinks that this has nothing in the context to lean upon. But see v. 14. He himself goes still further back, when he makes the ἡμεῖς (*we*) of this verse a resumption of that in v. 13.—His own view, in which he follows Schott, and is followed by Alford: 'the more, as the separation had been so recent,' carries with it the somewhat awkward suggestion, that the lapse of time would abate, or had already abated, the Apostle's fervour. It is, however, to be preferred to the opposite gloss of Oecumenius and Theophylact: 'more than was to be expected of those so recently separated.' Others (Luther, Musculus, Zanchius, Bretschneider, De Wette, Baumgarten-Crusius, Koch) lay the stress on the words, *not in heart:* 'the more, because still with you in heart.' But besides that, had the separation been in heart,

have already suggested, it may be sufficient to say with Calvin, that the writer's 'love, instead of being lessened by absence, was rather the more inflamed thereby.'[1] His removal to other scenes of labour had not alienated his affections in the least from his Thessalonian brethren. It had only been the occasion of more ardent desires for renewed fellowship; and not only of desires, but of prayers also, as in the next chapter: 'night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face;'[2] nor yet of prayers only, but also of distinct efforts for the accomplishment of that end.

'*Wherefore we would have come*'—*we wished*[3] *to come*—'*unto you, even I Paul*—for you are not to think that I am taking credit to myself for what might have been true rather of my companions in travel. To my certain knowledge, it was especially and emphatically true of myself. *Even I Paul*—burdened as I am with apostolic cares, and distracted by the concernments of all the churches, and the cries of a perishing world—*even I Paul wished to come unto you*—and that not once only, but repeatedly, *both once and again*, so steady and abiding, as well as fervent, was my desire; *and Satan hindered*, or *thwarted*,[4] *us*'—*Satan;* nothing less—an additional[5] confirmation of the reality and the strength

there would have been no desire whatever to return (Lünemann), that clause comes in merely as an incidental, parenthetical correction of the main thought, which is that of the separation.

[1] 'Adeo non imminutum fuisse amorem discessu, ut magis accensus fuerit.'

[2] Ch. 3 : 10. [3] ἠθελήσαμεν. [4] ἐνέκοψεν. [5] καί.

of the purpose, that it required Satanic craft and violence to defeat it.

Of this redoubled attempt we know nothing beyond what is here mentioned. The probability is that it was made at Berea, where Paul, you remember, halted on his way to Athens. But '*Satan thwarted*'—baffled—him; in what way is not specified. From the narrative, however, in the book of Acts, of the difficulties that soon beset the preacher in the former place, we may conclude that it was by keeping him so fully occupied with incessant conflicts and ever new tribulations of his own, as to leave him no leisure for carrying out his plan. And when to this it is added that the storm, which finally drove him from Berea, blew from Thessalonica, the impossibility of an immediate return to the Macedonian capital becomes apparent.

Now, while there is no express reference in the Acts to Satan's agency in the matter, you are yet to consider that in the wicked men, who every where sought to silence the evangelical proclamation, Paul saw the emissaries of hell—the children of disobedience, in whose hearts Satan worketh, leading them captive at his will. Here too he wrote from his own abundant daily experience, when he said: 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.'[1] Nor did he thus speak for himself alone. Just as, in the

[1] Eph. 6: 12.

case of Job, the sword of Sabeans and Chaldeans—the fire of God from heaven—the great wind from the wilderness—the sore boils from the sole of his foot to his crown—are all introduced as the instruments and manifestations of Satan's envious rage;—just as, in the case of our Lord himself, the same great Adversary, who sought His life in infancy through the jealousy of Herod, and assailed His filial integrity immediately after His baptism, pursued Him throughout His whole ministry, until in the hour and power of darkness, gathering all his strength for the final onset, he 'put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him,' and after the sop, for the securer accomplishment of the infernal purpose, and for the more direct gratification of his personal hate, he 'entered into'[1]—took bodily possession of—the unhappy wretch, and so brought the Saviour of the world to the cross;—even so Scripture gives us the very same explanation of the temptations and persecutions of the Church. 'And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.' 'And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried.' 'Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he

[1] Luke 22 : 53; John 13 : 2, 27.

was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child.'[1]

And what, brethren, is our consolation, what our security, in this dark presence of our great, unseen, but ever active and relentless Foe? Nothing but this, that neither against Christ, nor any of his servants, could Satan have any such power at all, except, and in so far as, it were given him from above.[2] And our 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.'[3] When Shimei cursed David, he doubtless gave utterance to a Satanic as well as a human malignity. But over and above, and as a controlling energy intermingled with, all baser elements, David perceived that 'the Lord had bidden him,'[4] and therefore he was still. And so Paul likewise was able to discern a Divine mission, and a Divine hand, in the buffetings of these messengers of Satan.[5] He elsewhere expressly refers to this sovereign disposal the arrangement of even the smallest details of his ministerial course. For instance, when writing in the midst of 'many adversaries' to the church of Corinth, his calm, cheerful language is: 'I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will. . . . I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.' And just so, in bidding farewell on one occasion to the

[1] Luke 22 : 31; Rev. 2 : 8,10; 12 : 12, 13. [2] John 19 : 11.
[3] 1 Cor. 10 : 13. [4] 2 Sam. 16 : 11. [5] 2 Cor. 12 : 7.

church of Ephesus, 'I will return again unto you,' said he, 'if God will.'[1]

The two remaining verses of the chapter contain a very noble and affecting statement of the reason, why the Apostle was thus earnest and constant in his desire to revisit Thessalonica. Of course, that he should do so was likely to be greatly for the advantage of the church. But, with the generosity and modesty so characteristic of the writer, this idea is not put forward, except by implication. The prominent consideration, you will observe, is Paul's own personal interest in the case. And in precisely the same spirit, having said to the Romans in the first chapter of that Epistle: 'I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established,' he hastens, as it were, to correct what might seem to be an immodest assumption of superiority, by at once adding: 'That is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.'

A very slight modification in the rendering of the 19th verse will help to bring out more exactly the meaning of the original: '*For what* is *our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying?*'[2] (so the English margin.) '*Or are not ye also, before*[3] *our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?*' In other words: 'No wonder that we should thus long after you. For what, in the day of Christ,

[1] 1 Cor. 4 : 19; 16 : 7, 9; Acts 18 : 21.
[2] *καυχήσεως.* [3] *ἢ οὐχι καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐμπροσθεν.*

which we are so eagerly expecting, what shall then be our ground of peculiar triumph as Christ's ministers. What, but sinners saved through our instrumentality? Or, if that be true in general, is there any doubt that you are of the number? you also? you, as well as the other churches, among which we have gone preaching the kingdom of God?'[1] And then comes, prompt as an echo, the bounding answer to these queries: '*For*'—the question I ask with a joyful confidence; *for*—'*ye*'—ye Thessalonians; ye, whoever else; ye, whoever not; *ye*—'*are*' even now—and how much more in that day of revelation and of reward shall ye be!—'*our glory and joy.*'

This style of thought and of expression is, you are aware, quite familiar to our Apostle. 'As also ye have acknowledged us in part,' he writes to the Corinthians, 'that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.' And to the Philippians: 'My brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown.'[2]

In that day, it is true, the Lord himself shall be the everlasting light of all the redeemed, and their God their glory.[3] But here Paul is speaking, not so much as an individual sinner saved by grace, as in his official relations as an Apostle. So, when exhorting the Philippians to be 'blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they shone as lights in the world;

[1] Acts 20: 25. [2] 2 Cor. 1: 14; Phil. 4: 1. [3] Is. 60: 19.

holding forth the word of life,' he does not hesitate to avow what I have called his own personal interest in the result, as one motive of his address, as it might also be of their compliance: 'that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.'[1] And in the same sense perhaps we may understand the Apostle John in his First Epistle (2 : 28): 'And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.'

Blessed be God, the glory that awaits the faithful minister of the truth of God is the subject of repeated promise both in the Old Testament and the New. 'They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.'[2] 'Brethren,' says James (5 : 20), 'if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.' 'If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon'—that is, on the one foundation, Jesus Christ—'he shall receive a reward,' says Paul.[3] And what, and how great that reward shall be, Peter tells us in his charge to his fellow-presbyters: 'And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.'[4] Of this crown each particular soul, by them quickened, and comforted, and

[1] Phil. 2 : 15, 16. [2] Dan. 12 : 3. [3] 1 Cor. 3 : 14. [4] 1 Pet. 5 : 4.

restored, and strengthened, and sanctified, through the gospel, shall be a bright, an imperishable, gem.

It is easy, then, to understand, why this consideration among others kept Paul so intently watchful over the walk of his spiritual children, and so earnest in his efforts to pay them frequent visits. In the first place, he liked to be near those whom he loved, and whom he looked upon as the pledges of his own eternal glory. And then he longed to make even that prospect at once securer and brighter, by confirming what had been wrought in them, and by imparting to them still other spiritual gifts for their furtherance and joy of faith.

1. These verses plainly teach the fact of Satan's actual, personal resistance to the influence of the gospel in our world, and something also of the variety of his methods for effecting his malign object. Not only does he 'blind the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,'[1] but, by all the devices of his craft and fury, he seeks, if he cannot break the frail vessels in which that light is stored, at least to limit the range of their influence. I cannot doubt, brethren, that one main source of our present dangers—I speak of the Church at large—is the prevailing ignorance of Satan's devices;—I had almost said, the prevailing forgetfulness of Satan's existence. Not a few seducing spirits are now abroad; and Christendom, with all her

[1] 2 Cor. 4: 4.

airs of presumption and carnal confidence, and with all her 'great swelling words of vanity,'[1] but too clearly betrays how unprepared she is to cope with them.

2. These verses, moreover, and the many parallel ones in other Epistles, furnish a beautiful exemplification of the wants and instincts of the social nature of man—of man redeemed and regenerated. How much stress does the Apostle every where lay on seeing the face of those he loved! There is a language of the eye, which cannot be written—a solace and satisfaction in the mere presence and contact of our friends, which no frequency and fervour of correspondence can supply. Indeed, the truth of this fact is plainly involved in those words of inspiration: 'He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?'[2]

Now, what is true of Christian brethren, with all the imperfections adhering to the best of them in the present estate, where the face is so often wet with tears, and distorted by pain, and furrowed by care, and darkened by unholy passion and the shadow of death—is it not reasonable to think that it must hold true likewise in the relations of all Christians to their Lord, the Man Christ Jesus? Accordingly, the entire spirit of the New Testament shows, that it does hold true in this instance, and that in the highest form and degree. It is the wonderful work of Divine grace in the soul, that,

[1] 2 Pet. 2: 18. [2] 1 John 4: 20.

'having not seen Christ, it loves Him; that, though now it sees Him not, yet believing in Him, it rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory'[1]—of glory in its reflections, prelibations, first dawnings. But glory in the splendour of its meridian—direct, unshaded, full-orbed glory—what is it but to see Christ 'as He is,'[2] and so 'ever be with the Lord'?[3]

Hence the passionate search of the forsaken Bride for Him whom her soul loveth. Hence her restlessness amid all present scenes, where even the best and dearest of her consolations, 'the first fruits of the Spirit,'[4] so far from stilling the groanings of her desire, tend only to inflame her continual supplications for His return, of whose great love for her they are the pledges and the memorials. 'How long, O Lord?' 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus!'[5]—there are assuredly no prayers more natural to the Christian heart, none that better become Christian lips, than these. Nor can I cease to regard it as by far the most dismal sign in the whole present aspect of things, that that cry, once so mighty and unanimous in Christendom, is now all but stifled in the communion of the baptized. Very many, it is true, on all sides we hear talking about Christianity. Very many even are prophesying in Christ's name, and in His name are putting forth efforts, nearly as impotent as they are vainglorious, to cast out devils. But where is the patient waiting for Christ himself? Where the

[1] 1 Pet. 1: 8. [2] 1 John 3: 2. [3] Ch. 4: 17. [4] Rom. 8: 23.
[5] Rev. 6: 10; 22: 20. [6] Matt. 7: 22.

sighing and mourning of the widowed Church? Where the wistful looking out at the windows, and chiding the delay of His chariot wheels? Busy as many Christian men and women are in their multifarious schemes for reforming society and converting the world, it is no comfort at all to them to hear of the possible arrest of all human projects by the sudden appearing of the Lord. In what sense, then, can they be said to 'love' that appearing,[1] as not only itself a distinct object, but the paramount object, of Christian hope? For only then shall the Church again look on the face of Jesus —rest in His bosom—and enter into His joy.

At all events, there can be no doubt whatever, that all Paul's expectations of joy from whatever quarter continually tended toward, and centred in, the day of Christ's coming. What an enhancement, for example, of his joy in the salvation of these very converts, did he anticipate from embracing them in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, as he led them forward to the throne, saying: 'Behold, I and the children which God hath given me.'[2] How much more effulgent the crown of his reward, that he receives it from the hand of the Chief Shepherd, who gave His own life for these little ones, and who now proclaims even that love, which led Him for their sakes into the wilderness and to the cross, satisfied and well pleased with His faithful servant and co-worker!

Dear brethren, shall this be, in any humble measure,

[1] 2 Tim. 4: 8. [2] Heb. 2: 13.

my joy—my crown of glorying—in that day? Surely, surely, this is the question of by far the most solemn, overwhelming import to my own soul, and daily would I feel how poor and stale, how barren and unfruitful, are all other triumphs, compared with that. Brethren, pray for me! And 'God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.'[1]

[1] 1 Sam. 12:23.

LECTURE XI.

I. THESS. 3 : 1–5.—'Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: that no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.'

THE writer had just been speaking of his strong desire, and the failure of his repeated efforts, to revisit Thessalonica; which desire and efforts, he intimates, were prompted by feelings of ardent affection for, and a deep personal interest in, the church planted there by his own hands. '*Wherefore*', says he—such being the state of my heart towards you, and such the hindrances to my immediate return—'*when we could no longer forbear;*' and so in the fifth verse: '*when I could no longer forbear.*' Excepting these two instances, the only places in the New Testament, where the word occurs that is here rendered *forbear*, are 1 Cor. 9 : 12 and 13 : 7, and there you will find it translated *to suffer*, *to bear*. The

same, I doubt not, is its meaning in the present context: '*When we could no longer endure*'[1] all this solicitude and suspense in relation to you, and could think of no other way of relief, '*we thought good to be left in*[2] *Athens alone, and sent Timothy*' to do what we should have so much rejoiced to do in person.

Paul at Athens! Paul at Athens alone! There are very few historical pictures equal to this in the elements of a sublime moral interest. You have all heard the fame of Athens—

> 'Athens the eye of Greece, mother of arts
> 'And eloquence;'—[3]

the metropolis of heathen civilization; where, however, the highest attainments of which the natural man is capable, in wit, philosophy, and intellectual culture generally, proved utterly powerless to save society from a childish vanity and frivolity of spirit, from political debasement, moral corruption, and the extravagances of a boundless idolatry.

In this renowned city Paul arrived, after he had been driven from Macedonia, with an escort of Berean brethren; who, 'receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed,' seem to have set out almost immediately on their return. Here, then, was Paul '*in Athens alone;*' with no one by his side likeminded, with whom to share his thoughts

[1] μηκέτι στέγοντες. [2] ἐν.—as in ch. 2 : 2.
[3] Milton, *Par. Reg.* iv. 240–1.

and emotions—the *paroxysm*[1] (Acts 17 : 16) that stirred his spirit—as he stood in the market place, and passed along streets bright with temples, and altars, and statues, and colonnades, and looked on the giddy, inquisitive, aimless crowd, and listened perhaps to the futile disputations of wrangling schoolmen—a scene, in which the rival glories of nature and of art were to his eye darkened and defiled by being prostituted to the service of a senseless and degrading, a soul-destroying and God-dishonouring superstition. To that very scene, with its open, however unconscious, confession of ignorance and helplessness, in the inscription '*To an unknown God*,'[2] the mind of the Apostle, it is probable, often reverted in after years; as when in some of his later writings he described the world as 'by wisdom knowing not God,' and declared of mankind, living from age to age in the presence of Nature's revelation of her great Author, that they 'became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.'[3] You of course remember also the noble remonstrance and protest against all this profane irrationality, that sounded forth from Mars' Hill in the face of the wondering and scoffing sects, and of the beautiful and gay pantheon

[1] Acts 17 : 15, 16 (παρωξύνετο). [2] Acts 17 : 23.
[3] 1 Cor. 1 : 21; Rom. 1 : 21–23.

itself of Greece. In the utterance of that protest the lonely servant of Christ found a present, though partial, relief to his aroused and burdened soul.

But how does Paul say, that he '*thought good to be left in Athens alone*,' and that this solitariness was in consequence of his sending Timothy to supply his own lack of service at Thessalonica ; whereas the historian of the Acts (18 : 1, 5) mentions, that both Silas and Timothy, when they followed the Apostle from Macedonia, rejoined him at Corinth—the place to which he went on his departure from Athens ? The difficulty may be met in one of two ways ; by supposing either that Timothy had really overtaken Paul at Athens, though the history is silent respecting such an earlier meeting, and had thence been sent back to Macedonia ; or that by Paul's directions the young evangelist had proceeded on his Thessalonian mission from Berea, and had thus been prevented from resuming attendance on the Apostle until the later period.

In either case, Paul evidently considered, and wished the church to consider, it to have been no slight sacrifice of personal convenience and comfort on his part, and to the same extent a confirmation of all that he had been saying respecting his love for the church, that for its sake, and for the sake of obtaining authentic intelligence in regard to it, he had been willing '*to be left in Athens alone*.' One is reminded of that plaintive word of Jesus to his followers just before His arrest : 'Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall

leave me alone'[1]—alone in the world of sin and death —alone in my last conflict with all the powers of darkness.

That 'it is not good that a man should be alone'[2] on missionary ground—the field of evangelical enterprise—any more than in the other great departments of human life, is a principle that was apparently recognized by our Lord himself, when he sent forth the twelve apostles and the seventy disciples 'two and two,'[3] as well as in the ordinary usage of the Apostolic Church. But in the present instance the desirableness of the arrangement was increased by the high character of the associate, whom Paul now relinquished for a season, and by the nature of the relations that existed between the two preachers. Timothy was Paul's 'own son in the faith'—his 'dearly beloved son;'[4] though, for the sake probably of putting the more honour upon him before the churches, he always speaks of him to them as his '*brother*.' Timothy was a '*minister of God*,' solemnly set apart to this service by the voice of prophecy, and by the consecrating hands of the presbytery and of Paul himself.[5] And finally he was Paul's '*fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ*,'[6] not only as all God's ministers are fellow-labourers, 'working the work of the' same 'Lord,'[7] but also on the ground of that special intimacy

[1] John 16:32. [2] Gen. 2:18. [3] Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1.
[4] 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2. [5] 1 Tim. 1:8; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6.
[6] For *διάκονον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ συνεργὸν ἡμῶν*, Griesbach, Meyer, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Bloomfield, Alford, read *συνεργὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ*.
[7] 1 Cor. 16:10.

of personal intercourse and co-operation, to which he was from the first admitted by the Apostle, and in which he continued to stand down to the close of the Apostle's career ; so that having occasion, shortly before his martyrdom, to send a messenger on a similar errand to the church at Philippi, Paul announced his intention from his prison at Rome in these words of singular tenderness and beauty : 'But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.'[1] You see, then, how Paul should have felt a keen sense of privation, when he spared this young man from his side, and consented '*to be left in Athens alone.*'

And now let us attend to the commission with which Timothy went charged. He was *to establish the Thessalonians, and to comfort them concerning their faith.* The word[2] here rendered *to comfort* is several times in these Epistles,[3] and very often elsewhere, *to exhort.* Thus, to take one or two parallel instances from the single book of Acts : Paul and Barnabas are said, in ch. 14 : 22, to have gone through Asia Minor, '*confirming*'—(almost the same word that is here translated *to establish*)—'*con-*

[1] Phil. 2 : 19–22. [2] *παρακαλέσαι.* See p. 87.
[3] Ch. 4 : 1 ; 5 : 14 ; 2 Thess. 3 : 12 ; &c.

firming the souls of the disciples, and *exhorting* them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.' In ch. 15 : 32 it is said that 'Judas and Silas . . . *exhorted* the brethren with many words, and *confirmed* them.' And finally, when Paul himself was subsequently enabled to effect his long-desired return to Macedonia, we read (ch. 20 : 2) of his 'going over those parts, and *giving* them much *exhortation*.'

If, then, you substitute this idea in the passage before us, and bring the second and third verses more closely together, you get a construction and interpretation, which are now generally, and I think correctly, received as the true ones: We sent Timothy . . . '*to establish you*,' by a renewed, authoritative exhibition, as in my stead, of the truth and its evidences; '*and*,' seeing it might well be apprehended, that one main source of danger to your constancy was the storm of persecution that every where rages against the gospel and its adherents, he was especially '*to exhort you*[1] *concerning*[2] *your faith, that no one*[3] *should be moved by*'—or *in*;[4] that is, *in the midst of*—'*these afflictions*.'

Of this heroic fortitude and stability in suffering for Christ's sake Paul himself was an illustrious example. 'The Holy Ghost,' said he, 'witnesseth in every city,

[1] This second ὑμᾶς (*you*) is cancelled by Schott, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Alford.

[2] For περί editors now commonly read ὑπέρ, in the sense of περί, or (as Lünemann, Koch, Alford) *in favour of, on behalf of*.

[3] μηδένα. [4] ἐν.

saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me.'[1] And that the present special exhortation had taken full effect upon the Thessalonians may be gathered from the testimony borne by Paul in the Second Epistle (1 : 4) : 'We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.'

Nor is there any difficulty, brethren, in conceiving by what considerations the exhortation would be enforced ; the example of the suffering Saviour, and the Church's fellowship in His sufferings ; the glory of God and of the gospel in the resignation, and steadfastness, and joy of His afflicted children ; the hope of the coming kingdom, and the purification, as by fire, of its heirs, and their preparation for their holy and eternal triumph. But you will observe, that the particular motive presented in the text is simply the Divine will in the matter : '*for ye yourselves know that unto this we are appointed.*'[2] As if he had said : It is enough for us to know that such is the will of God ; that this fiery trial happens not without His knowledge, and consent, and purpose, and control ; that He sits by the mouth of the furnace into which His people are cast ; and that both the fervour and the duration of the process are regulated by His infinite, fatherly wisdom and love. Gladly, we may be sure, would He spare us, as He would have 'spared His own Son,'[3] even so much as one pang—

[1] Acts 20 : 23, 24. [2] εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα. [3] Rom. 8 : 32.

one tear—were it not for the necessities of the case, arising from the prevalence of sin and death in the world, and the presence of both in the Church itself. Yea, even the holiness of the Church, imperfect as it is, ensures her suffering in such a world as this. 'Behold,' said her Lord, 'I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.'[1] From this mere contrariety of nature what can be expected, but violence on the one side, and distraction and sorrow on the other? As the Lord himself on another occasion explained the matter without a figure: 'If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.'[2] And so the Apostles and apostolic churches found it, and accounted it no 'strange thing,'[3] just because they had been thus fully forewarned of it.

In this part of the Christian calling, accordingly, the Thessalonians also had been indoctrinated by Paul. '*For indeed*,[4] *when we were with you, we told you before that*'—as the permanent and inevitable lot of the faithful in this life, and throughout this dispensation—'*we are to suffer tribulation*,' or, *be afflicted*;[5]—'*as also*[6] *it came to pass, and ye know*,' by painful, personal experience. Be it remarked that the original here makes it more certain than does the English, that the Apostle does not refer to some single statement of his on the subject, on some particular occasion, but to the habitual tone of his re-

[1] Matt. 10 : 16. [2] John 15 : 19. [3] 1 Pet. 4 : 12.
[4] *καὶ γάρ.* [5] *μέλλομεν θλίβεσθαι.* [6] *καθὼς καί.*

marks—the general tenor of all his teaching: *we used to tell you*, so the word[1] might be rendered. And then it is no less evident, that these many warnings were not so much any immediate, or exclusive, prophetic anticipation of what had already '*come to pass*,' and of which the beginning at least is recorded in the 17th chapter of the Acts, as an announcement of the standing law of the Church's present condition, and until her Lord return; of which law that beginning of trouble was only one, and a comparatively slight, illustration. Instead, therefore, of: '*We told you before that we should suffer tribulation*,' what the Apostle says amounts rather to this: *We were in the habit of forewarning you, that we are to be afflicted.*

And, brethren, that warning is just as needful for us who live in these latter days, as for those who suffered 'in the beginning of the gospel.'[2] The general grounds of it in the respective natures and the mutual relations of the Church and the world, are the same now as then; and, unless I utterly misconceive what God has revealed on a topic so full of solemn interest, the evidence from Scripture is explicit and abundant, that times of calamity yet await the flock of Christ, before it is finally gathered into the shelter of its everlasting rest, compared with which all that has gone before is but a faint prelude and rehearsal.

In the fifth verse the Apostle ventures at last to give

[1] προελέγομεν. [2] Phil. 4 : 15.

a somewhat more distinct expression, than he has yet done, to the fears that agitated him in regard to the Thessalonians; and it is also worth noticing, that the individuality of the writer, and his own feelings and agency, are again (see ch. 2:18) brought into vivid prominence, by the sudden exchange of the plural number for the singular: '*For this cause*'—that is, because of your suffering state as a church—'*when I could no longer forbear*'—literally, *I also*,[1] *I on my part*, I as well as my companions, *being no longer able to endure* this anxious suspense (as the word was before explained[2])—'*I sent to know your faith, lest by some means*'—or rather, *lest perhaps*,[3] and by means of these abounding trials—'*the tempter had tempted you*' to unbelief and apostasy, '*and our labour*'—all the *toil* expended in your organization, —'*should prove*[4] *in vain*'—in vain as regards the great end of your salvation—in vain as regards the joy which from your salvation I myself anticipated. The fact of the temptation might be assumed; but the Apostle must still be doubtful and anxious as to the result.[5]

Observe here, 1. in the first place, *the apostolic style of address to individuals and churches as liable to fall away from their Christian standing and profession.* 'The Lord,' indeed, 'knoweth them that are His;'[6] and all

[1] *κἀγώ*. [3] *στέγων*. See p. 166–7.
[2] See the common version of *μή πως* in 2 Cor. 2:7; 9:4.
[4] *γένηται ὁ κόπος*. [5] Hence the change of mood—*ἐπείρασεν, γένηται*.
[6] 2 Tim. 2:19.

such shall infallibly persevere, and be saved. But no such absolute knowledge belongs to us; and we can only judge, and hope or fear, according to the outward and fluctuating manifestations of the life.

2. In the second place, observe that *one main source of danger is the presence and activity of Satan.* '*The Tempter!*' What a name of wickedness and of terror! How experienced, how subtle, how assiduous, how relentless, alas, how successful, in seducing, blinding, misleading, destroying the human soul! You will find, brethren, that the great heroes of the faith—the mightiest champions of Christendom—such as Paul and Luther, have ever had the liveliest and the most abiding sense of the personality, and nearness, and unceasing counterworking, of this great Adversary of God and man, and have lived, and laboured, and prayed, in the spirit of an earnest and perpetual vigilance, 'lest Satan should get an advantage of'[1] them. Meanwhile, the befooled and captive worldling, and the carnal, frivolous professor, think that they can afford to smile at the deepest spiritual solicitudes and conflicts of such men.

3. Then note, thirdly, *the variety of Satan's temptations.* Sometimes he comes down in great wrath—as it were, with open violence, and a visible embodiment in his own likeness. Far more frequently he assumes the fair show of superior light and holiness—the glistering, bewildering disguise of what himself once was.[2] And

[1] 2 Cor. 2: 11. [2] Rev. 12: 12; 2 Cor. 11: 14.

oftentimes too, especially among suffering saints, he busies himself in suggesting timid doubts, and impious inferences from God's providential dealings of severity with His own children. See, brethren, that ye be 'not ignorant of Satan's devices.' And

4. Learn, lastly, *what is our best, our only, security against them.* That is not worldly shrewdness, dear hearers—nor intellectual ability—nor a common school education—nor learning, however extensive—nor science, however profound—nor all the refinements of civilization—and certainly quite as little is it a trifling, jeering scepticism. It is our *faith.* 'I sent to *know your faith*,' says Paul;—whether, amid the howling winds and swelling floods, the anchor of your souls held fast; knowing assuredly, even while I trembled for you, that, if it did, then all was well. 'And this,' brethren, 'is' still 'the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' This is 'the shield' of amplest circumference and heavenly proof, 'wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.'[1]

Ah, poor souls in this assembly—and I fear, I fear there are some such—which, all unfurnished with that shield, and armed only in their own vain conceit, are seen by the angels, standing out there, in nature's unfenced wilderness, naked and open to Satan's every assault. May the merciful God pity, and save, all such!

[1] 1 John 5 : 4; Eph. 6 : 16.

LECTURE XII.

I. THESS. 3 : 6–10.—'But now, when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see* you: therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?'

THE report brought from Thessalonica by Timothy, and Paul's feelings thereupon, are the main topics which these verses present for our consideration.

I. First, the report itself: '*But now*'—*just now*;[1] the letter seems to have been written immediately after Timothy's arrival. The word, indeed, is perhaps better construed with the sixth verse, thus: '*But, Timothy having just now come to us from you, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity*,' *or love*,[2] '*and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, even as*[3] *we also* to see *you*.'

The special errand, you remember, on which Timothy

[1] ἄρτι δέ. [2] ἀγάπην. [3] καθάπερ, as in ch. 2 : 11. See p. 119.

had been sent to Thessalonica, was to inquire into the faith of the afflicted church. And this is what he had ascertained. Though 'tribulation and persecution had arisen because of the word,' the church had not been 'offended.'[1] It none the less believed and loved. It was therefore a living, healthy church; and, while it so continued, nothing could harm it.

I shall not now repeat what was said on ch. 1 : 3 regarding '*faith and love*;'—*faith*, the spiritual apprehension of Divine things; *love*, its fruit and manifestation;—the two, with which is often in Scripture, and always in the renewed heart, associated their attendant hope, forming the sum of the new life in Christ Jesus, or what our Apostle calls 'the end of the commandment'—to wit, 'love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.' And just so the Apostle John: 'This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment.'[2]

Now, the Thessalonians did both; and so it is not surprising that Timothy was able to report also their affectionate disposition toward the man through whom they had been introduced to all this gracious experience: '*And that ye have good remembrance of us always.*' They thought much, and often, and always kindly, of their first teacher. And they fully shared his solicitude for renewed fellowship face to face: '*desiring greatly to see us, even as we also* to see *you.*'

[1] Matt. 13 : 21. [2] 1 Tim. 1 : 5; 1 John 3 : 23. Compare Philem. 5.

These sentiments of theirs toward Paul himself, however, were really an important confirmation of the more general statements respecting their '*faith and love*.' Had they, like the Galatians, been 'removed from Him that called them into the grace of Christ unto another gospel,' they would, no doubt, like the Galatians, have been found estranged also from one whom they well knew to be 'set for the defense' of that, which alone deserved the name.[1] Paul had come to them as an 'ambassador for Christ.'[2] The truth as it is in Jesus had been the beginning and end of all his instructions. He had known nothing among them, save that. If, therefore, they still retained a very high esteem for him—still cherished sentiments of warm attachment to his person—it could only be 'for his work's sake,'[3] and was of itself an assurance that their faith and their love were of the right kind. On the same principle he says to the Corinthians: 'Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you.'[4] It was of course pleasant to him as a man, to have a place in their hearts; and much more so, as a minister of Christ. But neither as a man nor as a minister did he covet any idolatrous veneration for himself. He sought only the glory of Christ in their salvation; as, when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorted them (ch. 13 : 7) to 'remember' even the departed leaders of Christ's flock, 'who had spoken unto them the word

[1] Gal. 1 : 6; Phil. 1 : 17. [2] 2 Cor. 5 : 20. [3] Ch. 5 : 13. [4] 1 Cor. 11 : 2.

of God,' his great aim was in this way to engage them to 'follow the faith' of those they had once loved and honoured.

II. But let us now, in the second place, consider Paul's own account of the feelings awakened in him by this recent intelligence from Thessalonica.

'*Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you*'—or *on your account*[1]—'*in all our affliction and distress, by your faith.*'

From this it would appear that, when the report reached the Apostle at Corinth, he was himself in circumstances of difficulty and trial. Of his comparatively protracted sojourn in that city at that period a brief historical record remains to us in the 18th chapter of the Acts, from which we learn that, toward the commencement of his labours there, the customary opposition of the Jews assumed a peculiarly malignant and blasphemous tone; insomuch that Paul 'shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.' But even so, we may be sure, he did not relieve himself from that 'great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart,' which in writing to the Romans (9 : 2–4) he so solemnly testifies was his in regard to 'his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh: who were Israelites.' And the gracious Lord, not unobservant of the cares and perils of His servant, thought it

[1] ἐφ' ὑμῖν.

well to cheer him 'in the night by a vision,' saying: 'Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee.'

Now at such a time it was that Timothy also arrived from Thessalonica with these 'good tidings' of a church very dear to Paul. And says he: '*We were comforted, brethren, on your account in all our affliction and distress by your faith.*' On another similar occasion he thus expressed himself in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (7 : 6, 7): 'Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.' Such was the sincerity, the fervour, the disinterestedness of the Apostle's love, that, manifold and severe as were his own trials and burdens, for him to hear of the spiritual welfare of his brethren, was ever as cold water to a thirsty and fainting soul. It revived—refreshed—strengthened him.

And observe that this spiritual welfare of the church was essentially connected with the church's '*faith.*' Timothy had spoken not only of its faith, but also of its love, and particularly of its loving remembrance of the Apostle. But because these last grew out of the first as their primary root, and because the first was that which secured the stability, as well as the fruitfulness,

of the church itself, therefore says Paul: '*We were comforted . . . by your faith.*'

The 8th verse is a very beautiful and emphatic statement of the general principle of this dependence for consolation and strength of Christ's ministers on those whom they serve in the Lord. '*For*'—do not wonder that such should have been the effect upon us of the news brought by Timothy; '*for now*'—*now*, whatever else befall—*now*, in the face of Jewish fury and Gentile scorn—*now*, amid 'fightings without, and fears within,' and 'deaths oft'[1]—'*now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*' He says not: *because ye stand;* but: '*if ye stand fast in the Lord.*' Even while pouring forth his joyful congratulations, he would impress upon his brethren the necessity of a sustained vigilance, and a persevering faith.

But consider for a moment this spiritual dependence of the ministry on the faith of the Church. 'Like priest, like people,' is an old and common saying. But its converse is just as true: '*like people, like priest.*'[2] And the truth of both propositions rests on the essential oneness of both priest and people in the body of Christ. It may, then, he a question, how far this helps to explain any felt inefficiency of the gospel ministry in our day. I say *felt* inefficiency; for by some at least in the ministry itself it is both felt and acknowledged. And assuredly ministers themselves are not free from

[1] 2 Cor. 7 : 5; 11 : 23. [2] Hos. 4 : 9.

guilt in the matter, if even the larger measure of guilt do not belong to them. Still, it may well check the tendency, in any worldly, decaying church, to a thoughtless, heartless, infidel contempt and disregard of Christ's great ordinance, to reflect that the ministerial life and energy of even Christ's own Apostles did sensibly depend on the faith and steadfastness of their brethren. '*Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*'

But who so blind as to pretend, that this stability is characteristic of the multitude of the baptized in these very churches of ours, and all around us? How little realizing is there by the most of their being '*in the Lord*' at all, and of the communion of saints in Him! How little 'building up of themselves on their most holy faith,'[1] even amongst Church professors! How little desire, as of newborn babes, for 'the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby'![2] Not to dwell on the utter, open abandonment by large classes of all Church relations, how is their impiety kept in countenance by the deplorable, the shameful facility with which many, who yet reckon themselves quite respectable Church adherents, will invent excuses, or yield to every pitiful temptation to 'forsake the assembling of themselves together,'[3] and squander the blessed hours of the few fleeting Sabbaths, which the mercy of God allows them, in a profane secularity! Ah, where, indeed, shall we look for that constant, enduring, victorious faith—where for that burning love—

[1] Jude 20. [2] 1 Pet. 2:2. [3] Heb. 10:25.

where for those continual intercessions for the feeble and burdened servants of Christ—without which 'the very chiefest Apostles'[1] felt themselves shorn of more than half their strength? There have been times, brethren, in the history of the Church of God, when they that believed 'continued steadfastly'[2] in attendance on her instructions and her prayers; whereas now it often happens that, out of perhaps a hundred disciples, scarcely a dozen can be mustered to a weekly prayer meeting or lecture, or a monthly missionary concert. The change surely is greater in this respect, than is either explained or justified by the mere change of circumstances. And is it something to be wondered at, or severely commented on, if the ministrations of a pulpit that is not upheld by the faith of the people, nor warmed by their love, nor encircled by their prayers, shall sometimes betray a lack of life and power, when the heart of him who fills it is weary, and heavy laden, and ready to faint?

Beloved friends of this church and congregation, you feel, I trust, that in these remarks there is something for your warning and admonition, as you value your own improvement, or the welfare of your children, or the credit and efficiency of the church, or the happiness of your minister. What was true of Paul can be no less true of us: '*Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*'

[1] 2 Cor. 11: 5. [2] Acts 2: 42.

In the 9th verse we have a fine illustration[1] of the manner in which this apostolic life flourished and triumphed under the influence of the good news from Thessalonica. Already, on the first report of it, he had been '*comforted*,' he tells us, '*in all his affliction and distress*.' And now, as he still thinks of it, his emotions deepen and swell into a flood of joy, which can only utter itself in praise. '*For what thanks can we render to God again for you*'—or, *concerning*[2] *you*. The word *again*, likewise, in the common version is not, as you might suppose, equivalent to *a second time*, but means *in exchange, in return for;* though on account of the ambiguity, and as being scarcely required for the full expression of the sense, it is dropped by nearly all the later versions. '*For what thanks can we render to God concerning you, for all the joy wherewith we rejoice for your sakes before our God?*' Not only was God to be recognized and glorified by them as the Author and Preserver of their faith, but the Apostle himself is at a loss how adequately to express his own gratitude for the joy thereby occasioned to him. And when he adds, as in ch. 1: 3, that this joy filled his soul even in the secret presence of his God, he once more, as it were, takes God to witness its reality, its purity, and its power.

Great, however, as had been the Apostle's sense of relief from a painful anxiety in regard to the spiritual

[1] γάρ. [2] περί.

condition of the church, and abundant as was now his joy on that account, nothing of all this could reconcile him to his own continued separation from it. On the contrary, the very confidence he now felt quickened and strengthened his wish to return: '*Night and day*,' says he in the 10th verse, '*praying exceedingly*'—*very exceedingly*;[1] the extraordinary fervour of these prayers being equal to their extraordinary constancy—'*that we may see your face*'—that necessary satisfaction of such a love as Paul's. The more God had done for them, the more God's servant loved them, and longed to behold their comely and holy order and fellowship. Yea, the more also did he long to be still further helpful to them in their Christian course: '*and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith*'—or *make up*—so the clause might be given somewhat more literally—*the deficiencies of your faith*.[2]

Some at least of these *deficiencies* will come before us in the progress of our exposition. But in the meanwhile you will mark the tender skill, with which the writer mingles with the expression of his exuberant joy the suggestions of a wholesome caution, and ministerial exhortation. And, dear brethren, what a rebuke is here to our indolent and ignorant self-complacency in our fancied attainments in the knowledge and experience of Divine things! Here, we cannot doubt, was

[1] *ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ — more than superabundantly.* Compare ch. 5 : 13.

[2] *καταρτίσαι τὰ ὑστερήματα τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν.*

a church equal, to say no more, to the very best that could now be produced. And yet even it had not got a creed, that exhausted the fulness of Christian truth; and equally capable of improvement was the spirit of faith, in which it held that measure of truth, which it had been taught. It was, therefore, no mere natural friendly interest that aroused in the Apostle's breast such earnestness of desire, and such agony of prayer; but Paul's conviction that, by a personal visit, he could do the church a most important service.

Very frequent, indeed, in Paul's writings are the intimations of a strong desire and purpose to lead the churches onward to ever higher, and clearer, and more enlarged regions of faith. As when in his unceasing prayers for the church at Rome he 'made request, if by any means now at length he might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto them. For,' says he, 'I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.'[1] And so in writing to the Corinthian church, preëminent among the apostolic churches, it would appear, for her spiritual gifts, his language is: 'I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit.'[2] But by far the most striking passage of this kind is Heb. 5 : 11—6 : 1–3 : 'Of whom' —that is, of Melchisedec—'we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers,

[1] Rom. 1 : 10, 11. [2] 2 Cor. 1 : 15.

ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God ; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection ; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.' Whether that Divine permission was ever granted, is more than we can tell. But you will observe that this very programme of elementary truths—of what the inspired writer regards as the first lessons in the school of Christ—does actually embrace the whole of the truth that the Christian teacher is now expected to meddle with, and, indeed, a good deal more than either he or his pupils are sometimes at all conversant with.

From all which, I repeat, we may learn, at any rate, the lessons of humility—'not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.'[1]

[1] Rom. 12: 3.

LECTURE XIII.

I. THESS. 3 : 11–13.—'Now God Himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you : to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.'

HAVING spoken of the great consolation and joy, the inexpressible thankfulness, and the unceasing, vehement prayers for his own return to Thessalonica, of all which the late good news from that city had been to him the occasion, the Apostle concludes the first division of the Epistle with solemn supplication, wherein is condensed the sum of his dearest wishes in regard to that church. Of both these Epistles it is observed by Bengel, that almost every chapter is sealed with such a devout breathing.[1] Here the form and the object of the prayer are twofold ; respecting, first, the personal return of the writer, and, secondly, the advancing sanctification of the church to its consummation in the day of the Lord's appearing.

[1] 'fere singula capita singulis suspiriis obsignata.'

'*Now God Himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.*'

Perhaps the word[1] rendered *now* is not to be taken as merely a particle of transition. It may have, as commonly elsewhere, a slightly adversative force, almost as if we should say, *but*: '*But may God himself*,' etc.; and, in that case, the opposition will be to Paul's own fruitless struggling of desire and effort. 'After all our ineffectual attempts and ceaseless longings, may He Himself, the Hearer of these daily and nightly prayers of ours, direct our way unto you, and then will all Satan's hindrances be vain.'

1. Observe here generally, in the first place, the Apostle's pious recognition of the Divine hand in the control and guidance of his simplest affairs and movements. Hitherto the way to Thessalonica had seemed to be insurmountably blocked up. But even now let God give the signal, and all impediments, whether from earth or hell, must dissolve and disappear. The road would at once become straight and plain. Whether Paul was ever to make another journey in that direction, and whether, and how far, if he did, it should be 'a prosperous journey,' were points that depended ultimately, he well knew, not on Satan or his emissaries and co-workers, but on the 'will of God.'[2] To that will, therefore, while pressing his suit with all filial freedom and importunity, he nevertheless in the end

[1] δέ. Compare ch. 5 : 23. [2] Rom. 1 : 10.

resigns himself with all filial meekness and submission.

This habit, brethren, of referring whatever even in our worldly plans and prospects most deeply interests us to the care and disposal of the infinite wisdom and love is, I believe, the grand secret of a safe, contented, happy, truly successful life. To any man that has really a child's heart toward God what a shelter and defense must it be from endless perplexities, harassing doubts and fears, yea, from the bitterness of disappointment itself, to feel himself and all that concerns him in God's hands! Oh, who would not covet such a sense of impregnable security, as this alone can give? I say, therefore, to every dear hearer in this congregation: 'Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.'[1] Like that noble servant of Abraham, when sent into a far country to seek a wife for his master's son, so do thou 'in all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'[2]

2. You will notice, secondly, that this prayer for providential guidance and furtherance is addressed, not only to God, but also to Jesus Christ. And must not Jesus Christ Himself, then, be a Divine Person? How could it otherwise be any thing short of blasphemy, thus to associate Him with the Supreme Being? Who but He, who 'thought it not robbery to be equal with God,'[3]

[1] Job 22 : 21. [2] Prov. 3 : 6. [3] Phil. 2 : 6.

could be lawfully named with God as exercising with Him a joint agency in regulating the ways of men? But that is the very claim, which in an absolute form, reaching even to the government of the universe, was made by our blessed Lord, while He was yet with us here below: 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. . . . All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. . . . Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.'[1]

It was in the faith evidently of this promise, that the Apostle indited the petition before us. He thought of the Father working, and of the Son also working—of the Father as in the Son, and working in Him, and through Him, all the good pleasure of His own will.

And you will allow me to remark in passing, that the ineffable intimacy of this co-operation is suggested still more strikingly by the very arrangement and construction of the original Greek. Thus, the word for *Himself* stands foremost in the sentence, and can be referred to both Persons as forming together one complex subject; somewhat as if we should say: '*May our God and Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself direct our way unto you.* And then, such a construction is not a little favoured by the fact that the verb, which unquestionably belongs to both Persons, is in the singular number. This latter point was noted by the Greek Fathers at least fifteen centuries ago, and was urged by

[1] John 5: 17; 14: 13; Matt. 28: 18.

Athanasius himself in the great Arian controversy. The writer, he says, by means of what in other relations would have seemed a grammatical anomaly, 'guarded the oneness of the Father and the Son.'[1] And the very same peculiarities recur at the close of the second chapter of the Second Epistle. But it is well, brethren, that we are not left to rest on exegetical niceties of this sort our undoubting faith in the glorious truths, that Christ 'and the Father are one'—that 'what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise'[2]—and that thus the Lord of the Christian is the Lord also of Providence.

3. It is now to be observed, in the third place, that the comfort and practical value of these truths depend entirely on the Christian's appropriating faith;—on a man's being able to employ as his own this favourite formula of the Church: 'God and *our* Father'—or *our God and Father*[3]—'and *our* Lord Jesus Christ.' What assurance, as of indefeasible possession—what satisfaction and triumph, as over against the 'gods many and lords many,'[4] that hold dominion in the world around—what tenderness, as of domestic endearment—is all involved in that one word! In connection with one or another of these names—'our God,' 'our God and Father,' 'our Lord Jesus Christ'—it occurs, I think, twenty-six times in these two short Epistles.

[1] *τὴν ἑνότητα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐφύλαξεν. Orat.* III. 11 *Contra Arianos.*

[2] John 10: 30; 5: 19. [3] *ὁ Θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ ἡμῶν.* [4] 1 Cor. 8: 5.

My dear hearers, is such phraseology the natural, spontaneous utterance of *your* hearts? Have you that noble spirit of 'confidence toward God,'[1] the Father and the Son, which will ever prompt you, as you draw near the throne, to cry with all a child's earnest trust, 'My Father!' or as Thomas in the presence of the risen Jesus: 'My Lord and my God'?[2] If not—if, on the contrary, yours is still 'the spirit of bondage to fear'[3]—or call it merely the spirit of alienation, forgetfulness, and unconcern—can you think it well for any intelligent, moral creature of God, in any the remotest corner of God's universe, to cherish such a temper? What madness, then, to cherish it—to live in it, and die in it—here, in a world so near to God—a world whose rocky wildernesses even have heard His name and His law proclaimed by His own voice—a world, on which, for the dishonour done to that name and that law, rests the burden of an infinite curse—a world, therefore, in which death reigns—and yet a world, in the very centre of whose darkness and desolations stands the cross whereon Jesus died, a propitiation for sin, at once death's greatest victim, and only conqueror! Oh, is it, dear, dying sinners, in such a world as this, that you can afford to live, and to die, without God, and without Christ?

But let us pass to the consideration of the second petition of this apostolic prayer, as contained in the

[1] 1 John 3 : 21. [2] John 20 : 28. [3] Rom. 8 : 15.

12th and 13th verses;—the petition which has respect to the Church's progressive sanctification, and final perfecting in the day of Christ.

The particle by which it is introduced, and which is here translated *and*, is the same which in the 11th verse is translated *now*, and here also, as there, it may be explained adversatively: '*But you*'—(which, indeed, much better represents the original arrangement also of the sentence);—'such is our prayer for ourselves; *but you*—whether we come or not[1]—*may the Lord make to increase and abound in love toward one another, and toward all*,[2] *even as we do*'—*even as we also*[3]—'*toward you.*'

He to whom this petition is addressed is '*the Lord*'—the same Lord,[4] doubtless, who had just before been named—'our Lord Jesus Christ,' who Himself 'purchased the Church with His own blood,'[5] and who still exercises over it in all the places of its dispersion, and through all the changing scenes of time, the tenderest and most effectual care. But what is here particularly to be noticed is, that the supremacy previously assigned to our Lord in the region of external providence, is now extended to the domain of the spirit, and the workings of God's grace in the souls of men. It can scarcely be necessary that I suggest to you, what a

[1] Bengel: 'sive nos veniemus sive minus.'
[2] *εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας.* [3] *καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς.* Though Alford would 'rather understand it of the Father.'
[4] Acts 20: 28.

mighty confirmation is thus afforded of the inference already drawn from the former prerogative, in regard to the true and essential Divinity of the Saviour. 'God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.'[1] He alone of all beings receives, or is able to receive, the immeasurable fulness of the Spirit; and that Spirit's all-subduing energy is put forth at the will, and in the name, of Jesus. 'The Apostles said unto the Lord: Increase our faith.'[2] And to Him also Paul commends the Thessalonians, as to the inexhaustible source of love.

He had just been speaking with joy and thankfulness of their 'love'—their 'labour of love.' But now in this distinguishing, crowning excellence of the Christian character he would have them '*to increase and abound;*' and, in the fulness of his heart toward them, he does not hesitate to propose himself as an example: '*even as we also toward you.*'

Their graces, he knew, and he would have them to remember, were still imperfect. As there was something 'lacking in their faith,' which he himself longed to supply by a renewed personal ministration of the truth, so neither had their love yet attained to its heavenly temper; and to this, by his prayer on their behalf, he teaches them to aspire by cherishing the spirit of a close communion with their loving Lord.

Mark, too, the objects of the Christian's love: '*toward*

[1] John 3 : 34. [2] Luke 17 : 5.

one another'—that is the brotherly love of the children of God,—'*and toward all*'—their universal love, in which they imitate their 'Father which is in heaven.'[1] For it is quite unnecessary to understand the writer as confining the latter manifestation to all Christians.[2] In this love there is nothing narrow, or sectarian, or fanatically exclusive. In the bosom of the Church, it is true—in 'the household of faith'—it finds the objects of its fondest and most complacential regard. Here, as it reclines at the table of redeeming love, it delights to behold its own likeness—the family likeness of the common Father—multiplied around. Yes, here is its rest, and here it desires to dwell. But at the same time, and 'as it has opportunity, it does good unto all men.'[3] Its 'neighbour' is whoever needs its help, and 'the field' of its operation 'is the world.'[4]

And now we are to contemplate the design and tendency of this progressive enlargement of the Church's love. '*To the end He may stablish*,' says the Apostle—or simply, *to the establishing*[5]—'*your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father*,[6] *at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints*.'

This, then, brethren, is the end of all;—this, the consummation of your faith, and love, and hope, and temptations, and sacrifices, and toils, and of all these present ministries and ordinances; this, the imperishable

[1] Matt. 5: 45. [2] So Theodoret. [3] Gal. 6: 10.
[4] Luke 10: 36; Matt. 13: 38. [5] *εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι.* [6] As in v. 11.

fruit of the Spirit's almightiness;—this, the blessed result of your Redeemer's humiliation, and tears, and death, and intercession;—this, the glorious issue of the Father's 'eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord;'—this, namely, 'that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.'[1] Oh, the wonders of that process, by which the children of wrath have thus been restored to the fellowship of the blessed;—by which they, who had sunk down near to the mouth of hell, have been raised far above the splendours of all inferior thrones, to sit forever by the side of Immanuel;—a process, in fine, by which the most darkened and degraded slaves of corruption now appear without rebuke before *Him*—look up undismayed and call *Him* Father—'in whose sight the heavens are not clean,' and 'His angels He charged with folly.'[2] Then, indeed, when Christ who 'loved the Church, and gave Himself for it,' having 'sanctified and cleansed it with the washing of water by the word,' shall 'present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish,' then shall the purpose of God, in 'creating all things by Jesus Christ,' be clearly revealed, and 'unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places shall be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.'[3] It may well be, that unnumbered ages shall have passed away, before even they begin to sound all its depths.

[1] Eph. 3:11; 1:4. [2] Job 15:15; 4:18.
[3] Eph. 5:25–27; 3:9, 10.

Only this much is already ascertained, that every speck and stain of depravity shall then have vanished from the face of our ransomed nature, like a summer's cloud, in the ardours of Divine love. The new creation—the second and greater work of Deity—is completed, and the everlasting Father looks down, and pronounces it good. In the language of inspiration, 'the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, shall make you perfect, shall stablish, strengthen, settle you'[1] in the joys of holiness, and in the paths of unswerving obedience around His throne.

Observe also the time fixed for all this: '*at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints;*'—it being an understood thing in the Church that her Lord will come again; and come not alone, but attended and sung in His triumphal progress by a yet more numerous and glorious retinue, than that which met Him, and hailed Him, as He ascended victorious from the scene of His conflicts and humiliation:—'*with all His saints,*' or *holy ones*. For we need not, and, I think, ought not to restrict the word here to mean either the angels exclusively,[2] or the redeemed from among men exclusively,[3] or some particular class of these latter;[4]—

[1] 1 Pet. 5 : 10.

[2] So, among others, Piscator, Grotius, Hammond, Macknight, Pelt, Schott, De Wette, Lünemann.

[3] Musculus, Aretius, Estius, Flatt, Conybeare.

[4] As the souls of departed saints (Gill), or the earlier perfected believers (Olshausen).

interpretations, which have all had their respective advocates. But I can see no sufficient reason for abating the full force of the expression: 'with all the holy beings, saints and angels, that shall then belong to Christ—elect and forever reconciled in Him.'

To this it has been objected that 'our Lord will not come *with all His people*, since some of His people will be on earth.'[1] But even if these are to be excepted, the language will none the less admit of easy explanation. A person might write from a distance, that he is coming with all his friends to see me, and not mean thereby to exclude me from the number of his friends. Or another answer may be given. From ch. 4: 14–17 it is evident that, although for the purposes of present consolation the writer expressly certifies that the sleepers in Jesus shall be brought with Him, yet neither shall they have any advantage, as to the time of entering into the presence of their Lord's glory, over those who are alive and remain. The two classes shall be caught up together to meet the descending Saviour, and both together shall then form His shining train.

There is still one other point that deserves notice, for the due illustration of these verses; and that is the connection here intimated as existing between the enlargement of Christian love and the ultimate perfection of the Christian character. For the Apostle, you perceive, prays for the former in order to the latter.

[1] Conybeare.

Now, in the first place, this connection is one of *cause and effect*, or of *means and end*. The moral perfections of God Himself are in Scripture summed up in that one word, *love:* 'God is love;' and in the spirit of the same Divine philosophy it is said that 'love,' as manifested by God's intelligent creatures, 'is the fulfilling of the law.'[1] Every accession, therefore, of purity and strength to the love of the Christian is just another step gained towards his predestined conformity to the image of God's Son. For there is in love a purifying efficacy to cleanse us from all pollution. It is the very breath of the Spirit, in which the dross of our old nature shall finally be consumed.

And then again we need not shrink from saying, that the connection is one of *reward*. The same Lord who 'giveth grace' to His people, and still 'more grace,' has promised to crown all with glory.[2] And thus it is that, 'as sin hath reigned unto death, even so grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.'[3]

1. From what has been said you will easily infer, brethren, in the first place, the hypocrisy and folly of a religious profession, in which there breathes no spirit of love either toward the brethren, or toward our fellow-men.

2. Secondly, let us, in imitation of the Apostle, by

[1] 1 John 4: 8; Rom. 13: 10.
[2] Ps. 84: 11; James 4: 6. [3] Rom. 5: 21.

fervent prayer seek those heavenly influences, which will make us to increase and abound in this the most excellent of all the graces. As Paul said to the Philippians, so say I to you: 'And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.'[1]

3. Finally, dear brethren, as you value this 'great salvation,'[2] see that you love, and exercise yourselves day by day in the blessed hope of, that 'day of Christ.' It shall also be the day of 'all His saints.' Then shall the salvation itself be perfected, and the Church shall receive her crown.

[1] Phil. 1: 9, 10. [2] Heb. 2: 3.

LECTURE XIV.

I. THESS. 4 : 1–3.—'Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, *so* ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.'

WE now enter on the second great division of the Epistle. This comprises the last two chapters, and in it the writer, according to his wont, along with certain special instructions regarding the Lord's second coming, and the prospects of such as die in the faith before that event, exhibits and enforces the practical duties of the Christian life. Eminent among the Apostles as the strenuous asserter of an absolutely free justification —of salvation by the grace of God, and not by the works of man's righteousness—there was at the same time none more earnest than he in 'affirming constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.' 'If we live in the Spirit'—if, that is, we are quickened from the death of sin by the Spirit's new-creating breath—it is then, Paul taught, the natural, the inevitable result, that we

'also walk in the Spirit.'[1] A regenerated, reconciled soul, living contentedly on in sin, 'that grace may abound'—the very conception is in Paul's estimation a horror and an impossibility.

At the close of the preceding chapter the Apostle, as the last and highest expression of his love for his brethren, had prayed the Lord to perfect them 'in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.' But this consummation, they must not be allowed to forget, was to be reached, not independently of their own will and efforts, but by means of these; God 'working in them,' not only by His grace, but by all the motives suitable to their redeemed nature, 'both to will and to do of His good pleasure,' and so enabling them, in a most important and indispensable sense, to 'work out their own salvation.'[2] Hence the formula of connection and transition, with which the present chapter commences. *'Furthermore then';—'Furthermore'; for the rest;*[3] or, as the same word is often rendered elsewhere,[4] *finally;—'Finally therefore, brethren'*—such being the glorious end for which you have been called of God, and as working together with God toward that end—'*we beseech you, and exhort by the Lord Jesus.*'

We have here a good example of that affectionate

[1] Tit. 3 : 8; Gal. 5 : 25.
[2] Phil. 2 : 12, 13.
[3] τὸ λοιπόν.
[4] 2 Thess. 3 : 1; Eph. 6 : 10; Phil. 3 : 1; &c.

mildness of address, in which Paul delighted; as when he wrote to Philemon (8, 9): 'Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee;' and he speaks of his age, and of his bonds. In the present instance, however, addressing a church, he adds to the friendly urgency of brotherly entreaty the solemnity also of official exhortation. '*We beseech you, and exhort by the Lord Jesus;*' or rather, *in the Lord Jesus;* with the authority that belongs to my position in the body of Christ.[1]

And what was that on which the heart of the Apostle was thus earnestly set? '*We beseech you, and exhort in the Lord Jesus, that, according as ye received from us*[2] *how ye ought to walk and please God,*[3] *ye would abound yet more.*'[4]

It is, then, a possible thing for a church so to walk as to please God. And what an incentive to a holy life is it, that then 'the Lord taketh pleasure in His people,' as a father in 'his own son that serveth him.'[5] What a comfort to us, in the sense of our weakness and unworthiness, to be assured, that every sincere, however feeble and imperfect, attempt to glorify God in the performance of His will, is regarded by Him with a real complacency and satisfaction, and that, even when our heart condemns us, He 'upbraideth not.'[6]

[1] *ἐν.* Compare Rom. 9: 1; 2 Cor. 2: 17. [2] *καθὼς παρελάβετε παρ' ἡμῶν.*
[3] Wells, Lachmann, and Alford here insert the words *καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε, as also ye are walking.* [4] *μᾶλλον.*
[5] Ps. 149: 4; Mal. 3: 17. [6] James 1: 5.

Observe, however, that the Church needs to be instructed as to '*how*' she 'ought to walk and please God.' It was not enough for Paul to see the Thessalonians 'turn to God from the idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from the heavens.' That was but their introduction into Christ's school. They were not for a moment to imagine, that now they had no more to do—nothing but to lay themselves down, and sleep, perhaps, even more profoundly than before. Nor yet was their zeal, whatever of that stirred within them, to be expended wholly on plans and agencies for bringing others in. They themselves had still much to learn—the entire code of Christian morals, or 'how they ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.'[1] These lessons, with all patient particularity of statement and detail, and enforced by the motives and sanctions of faith, Paul delivered to them, and they received from him. '*For ye know*,' he adds, '*what commands*[2] *we gave you by the Lord Jesus.*'

Paul's office, you perceive, in the inculcation of duty, as well as in the exhibition of truth, was strictly ministerial. He neither had, nor pretended to, any right of lordship over God's heritage. He 'delivered' to others only what he himself first 'received of the Lord.' He 'taught them to observe all things whatsoever the Lord had commanded him'[3]—those things—and all of them

[1] 1 Tim. 2 : 15. [2] παραγγελίας.
[3] 1 Cor. 11 : 23; Matt. 28 : 20.

—and none others. And therefore, in so far as Paul acted in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus, his instructions were '*commands*'—solemn, binding charges—reflecting the majesty, as well as the love, of their original Source. A precious *gift*, indeed, to the Church of God is the scheme of the Christian ethics;—given, however, not to be studied merely, or admired, or praised, but obeyed.

The writer, accordingly, with all his parental tenderness of feeling toward those whom he had 'begotten through the gospel,'[1] is yet ever mainly anxious to hear, not so much of their outward prosperity and freedom from persecution, as of their 'exercising themselves unto godliness.'[2] Nor, as Paul conceived the matter, could this be done by a listless acquiescence in present attainments, or by a formal attendance, however punctual, on the public ordinances, however multiplied. There was needed also a steady, earnest purpose of heart, and bent of will—a resolute 'going on unto perfection'—a 'forgetting of those things which were behind, and a reaching forth unto those things which were before,' and so a 'pressing toward the mark.'[3] To this end, in every Epistle he gives precept upon precept, and line upon line. Much as he loved his Thessalonians, for example, and highly as he commended their progress thus far, he now 'beseeches them, and exhorts in the Lord Jesus *that they would abound yet more.*' And the rest of the letter is taken

[1] 1 Cor. 4: 15. [2] 1 Tim. 4: 7. [3] Heb. 6: 1; Phil. 3: 13, 14.

up with such a restatement of evangelical duties as the peculiar condition and circumstances of that church required.

And here you will allow me to remark, before we proceed, that if Apostles, whose diocese was the world, had this abiding care for the continuous training of their converts in faith and holiness, that pastor and teacher of any particular congregation nowadays must have a very imperfect idea of the work assigned to him, whose great, perhaps his only, ambition is to swell the muster-roll of his so-called converts, and who, instead of 'feeding them with knowledge and understanding,'[1] considers his duty toward them discharged, when he has succeeded in inoculating them with his own sectarian fanaticism, and then turns them loose upon the community as emissaries of rebellion in families, and robbers of other churches. Such impudent tactics, under the guise of religious zeal, are not at all, I think, apostolic. They can at best but remind one of Samson's style of warfare on a certain occasion, when he 'went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives.'[2] From all which sort of practice may the good Lord deliver this church, whether as an agent in it, or

[1] Jer. 3 : 15. [2] Judg. 15 : 4, 5.

a sufferer from it. No man, indeed, who really knows the spiritual condition of any of our churches—their prevailing worldliness of temper and life; their great ignorance of, and slender interest in, the truth of God; the faintness of their love to Christ, and Christ's cause, and people, and glory; their covetousness; their evil-speaking; their numberless little, unbrotherly, unsisterly jealousies and alienations; their frequent paltry feuds and animosities—no one, I say, that understands these things, to add no more, will deem the suggestion an uncharitable one, that we all 'have need that one teach us again which be the first principles of the oracles of God,'[1] regarding duty as well as doctrine—the things to be done by us, as well as the things to be believed—or, as our Apostle expresses it, '*how we ought to walk and please God.*'

'*For*,' says he (v. 3), '*this is God's will*,[2] *your sanctification*'—your separation from an evil world, and entire consecration to His own service and glory—such is *God's will;* and by this one general prefatory announcement the writer at once lifts the subject out of the sphere of mere earthly motives and expediencies, and sheds the dignity and lustre of a Divine sacredness over the minutest specifications that follow, and into all the relations and recesses of the Christian's daily life. '*This is God's will, your sanctification;*'—what a stimulus to exertion! what an encouragement in prayer! For, if that be

[1] Heb. 5 : 12. [2] θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ.

His will, will He not strengthen us to fulfil it? Only let us have the filial spirit, which not merely 'cries, Abba, Father,'[1] but whose delight—whose 'meat'[2]—is to do the Father's will; and then, in the midst of all our shortcomings, and weaknesses, and temptations, we shall go with boldness to the throne, saying: 'Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God.'[3]

Yes, brethren, '*your sanctification*,' little as we habitually think of it, was that which filled Christ's heart as He ascended the cross. 'He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.'[4] No wonder that it should also be the burden of His prayers on earth and in heaven: 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.' And that prayer shall be answered. For not only is '*your sanctification*' one main end of the Saviour's mediation, and of the Spirit's working; but, behold, it is likewise the sum of '*God's will*' concerning you.

And the result, brethren, is one worthy of this coöperation of the whole, undivided Godhead. For it is not any 'making clean the outside of the cup and of the platter'[6]—it is not any mere external reformation—it is not even any partial inward amelioration—that is here thought of, but '*your sanctification*;' or, as the next chapter has it, that 'the very God of peace may sanctify you wholly; and your whole spirit and soul

[1] Rom. 8 : 15. [2] John 4 : 34. [3] Ps. 143 : 10. [4] Tit. 2 : 14.
[5] John 17 : 17. [6] Matt. 23 : 25.

and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Then shall the disorder of our fallen, but redeemed, nature be thoroughly redressed. Every thought and intent of the heart, every feeling and emotion and aspiration of the soul, every issue of life, shall be eternally and altogether holy unto the Lord. Oh, blessed hope! Thrice glorious triumph of God's grace, and of the Church's faith! She shall be holy as God is holy! perfect as He is perfect!

From this brief, but comprehensive and inspiriting, assurance the Apostle comes immediately to particulars. And the first point he takes up is the obligations of chastity; dwelling at some length, and with a force of denunciation proportioned to the magnitude, and prevalence, and fatal tendencies of the evil, on the opposite sin: '*that ye abstain from fornication;*'—under which word may be understood as included all lusts of the flesh.

Abstinence from these, the Thessalonians are reminded, was one element in the process of their sanctification; nay, a main and essential part of it, though one which the popular sentiment of the heathen has never made much account of. Indeed, I am not aware that fornication was at that period accounted a sin at all. When Gentiles, therefore, were lifted out of the midst of the surrounding pollutions into the Christian Church, we need not wonder that the taint of their old corruptions still adhered to them. The first Christian

Council—that very Council which asserted Gentile freedom from Mosaic ordinances—deemed it needful to insert in the *Magna Charta* of our liberty a solemn warning against this vice. And some time before Paul wrote what we have on record as the First Epistle to the Corinthians, he had already 'written unto them in an epistle not to company with fornicators.' Yet in that First Epistle he still found it necessary to renew his indignant protest, and to warn them of the impossibility of any such transgressors 'inheriting the kingdom of God.'[1] Nay, even in the Second Epistle what a sad glimpse do we obtain of the internal condition in this respect of a community, which seems to have been endowed, beyond the ordinary measure of apostolic churches, with the supernatural gifts of Pentecost! 'For I fear,' says the Apostle, 'lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.'[2]

It is, in fact, one of the prophetic marks of the Gentile apostasy, that men shall 'walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness.'[3] And every student of the history of Christendom knows, what a proneness there has ever been in religious error of various kinds to develop itself into the principles and practices of an unbridled licentiousness. In our own day the same thing is observable, and in more quarters than one.

[1] 1 Cor. 5 : 9; 6 : 9, 10. [2] 2 Cor. 12 : 21. [3] 2 Pet. 2 : 10.

Now to all this, however disguised and palliated, and by whatever pleas defended, the gospel of the grace of God opposes a stern, absolute veto, and a fiery anathema. 'Fornication, and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints,' says Paul to the Ephesians (5 : 3). And when, in writing to the Colossians (3 : 5), he calls on them to 'mortify their members which are upon the earth,' the subsequent enumeration shows that the same class of offences is still uppermost in his thoughts

There is, in truth, not one of all 'the works of the flesh,'[1] that is more thoroughly incompatible with the life, and spirit, and calling of the new man in Christ Jesus. Glorying only in the cross—himself thereby 'crucified to the world'—himself 'risen with Christ'—he feels himself brought under the attraction and sway of the powers of the world to come. He 'seeks those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. He sets his affections on things above, not on things on the earth.'[2] In yielding himself to God, it was with an unreserved surrender of 'spirit and soul and body.'[3] He loves to think that they were all equally redeemed with blood, and that the body, no less than the others, is, to use the Apostle's word, 'for the Lord.' It is 'the member of Christ.' It is 'the temple of the Holy Ghost.' And 'in his body,' as 'in his spirit,' the believer is to 'glorify God,' who claims both alike for His own.[4]

[1] Gal. 5 : 19. [2] Gal. 6 : 14; Col. 3 : 1, 2. [3] Ch. 5 : 23.
[4] 1 Cor. 6 : 13, 15, 19, 20.

Such, brethren, are the considerations which Paul delights to urge on the Christian conscience as motives to a watchful and jealous purity, lest we defile what is not ours—what has become sacred as the altar—what belongs by solemn covenant, by the purchase of redemption, by the seal of regeneration, to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Such are the reasons—and oh! how infinitely superior are they to all those of the worldly moralist and statistical reformer, with his physiological, and social, and economical demonstrations—such, I say, are the reasons, or some of them, why the servant of Christ would have us 'cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.'[1] For, of course, the two—filthiness of the flesh, and that of the spirit—are inseparable, and they act and react, the one on the other. 'Out of the heart,' said our Lord, 'proceed adulteries, fornications.'[2] And these in turn, according to the sad, remorseful confession of one of the greatest of the sons of genius, whose name now[3] fills the world,

'—— harden a' within,
And petrify the feeling.'

Or, to use the still more solemn and persuasive language of the Apostle Peter: 'Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.'[4]

[1] 2 Cor. 7 : 1. [2] Matt. 15 : 19. [3] January, 1859—the Centenary of Burns' birth. [4] 1 Peter 2 : 11.

LECTURE XV.

I. THESS. 4 : 4–8.—'That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: that no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter: because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit.'

WHAT is the precise meaning of the fourth verse, has long been a question among commentators. Not a few take '*vessel*'[1] as a metaphorical designation of a *wife*,[2] and regard the passage as parallel to 1 Cor. 7 : 2, 'Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.' Most, however, understand by *vessel* here the human *body*, as that into which the spirit has, as it were, been poured, and in which it resides; or as the tool or instrument, which the soul employs in the execution of its purposes. This latter view is perhaps on the whole to be preferred;[3] though

[1] σκεῦος.

[2] So Augustine, Zwingle, Estius, Seb. Schmid, Wetstein, Koppe, Schott, DeWette, Lünemann, Huther, Alford, and others.

[3] On the other view, 'that each of you should *know how to acquire* his own vessel' (Alford) seems scarcely Pauline.

still it may not be quite apparent, what it is to '*possess*' one's body.

Now it is generally agreed, that the verb[1] so rendered does not properly signify *to possess*, but *to get possession of*. In the whole New Testament it occurs just seven times, and a glance at the other six instances will be of use in helping you to a satisfactory judgment in the case before us:—Matt. 10:9; Acts 1:18, '*purchased*'—rather *obtained, acquired;* as if we should say: 'A bit of ground—a dishonourable grave—that was all the traitor got as the reward and memorial of his infamy;' 8:20; 22:28.

You perceive, then, that in these four instances at any rate out of the six the true idea—recognized as such in our version—is that of *gaining, obtaining, securing possession of*. Unfortunately our translators deemed it necessary in the other two texts, as well as here, to drop this interpretation, and substitute *to possess:* Luke 18:12, 'I give tithes of all that I possess;' which unquestionably should be, 'of all that I *acquire*.' What the Pharisee boasts of is, that he gives tithes, not of all his property, but of all his increase. Then Luke 21:19, 'In your patience possess ye your souls,' becomes quite as intelligible, and much more impressive, if we say: 'In your patience,' by your endurance, 'gain your souls'—secure their safety; according to the promise, 'He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.' (Compare Matt. 16:25; Luke 9:24.)

[1] κτᾶσθαι.

Suppose now that we read our verse thus: '*That every one of you know how to possess himself of*'—that is, get into his possession and control—obtain the mastery of—'*his own vessel*,' or *body;* the body is then conceived of as something to be subdued by the Christian, and so *appropriated, made his own.* Nor would such a representation be any thing very strange in itself, or foreign to Paul's style of thought. 'I keep under my body and bring it into subjection,' he says of himself (1 Cor. 9 : 27), and his own phraseology in that place is singularly vivid and graphic. Literally rendered, it amounts to this: 'I hit my body under the eye, and lead it about as my slave.'[1]

To the like victorious supremacy of the higher nature I consider the Apostle to be here exhorting his brethren. 'That sanctification, which I have just said is God's will concerning you, indispensably requires *that every one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence*,' or, *not in passion of lust.*'[2] In other words: 'Instead of serving divers lusts and pleasures, and thus making the body your tyrant and your god, learn to master it in a holy and honourable use, not in a vile abuse.'

You perceive, brethren, that in all this there is nothing whatever of that miserable fanaticism, where it does not rather deserve the name of a base hypocrisy,

[1] ὑπωπιάζω μου τὸ σῶμα καὶ δουλαγωγῶ.
[2] ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας.

which, under the guise of an absorbing spirituality, has sometimes thrown the body and its propensities altogether outside of the domain of moral obligation. And quite as little is there of Romish asceticism—of an indiscriminating, monkish austerity. No; the gospel bids us neither to neglect the body, nor to crush it, but rather to win it as an 'instrument of righteousness'[1] for God. No longer allowed to rule, it is yet called to serve. Deeply as sin has degraded it, it too, as well as the soul, is brought under a sanctifying process, and honour is put upon it as a partaker of Christ, of His flesh and of His blood—as a habitation of God through the Spirit, and an heir of the resurrection.

On the contrary, it is one special aggravation of the sin in question, that in a manner peculiar to itself it 'dishonours'[2] the body—degrades it—bestializes it. 'Flee fornication,' writes Paul to the Corinthians. 'Every sin that a man doeth, is without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body.'[3] On which Dr. Hodge remarks in his recent Exposition of that Epistle: 'This does not teach that fornication is greater than any other sin; but it does teach that it is altogether peculiar in its effects upon the body; not so much in its physical as in its moral and spiritual effects. The idea runs through the Bible that there is something mysterious in the commerce of the sexes, and in the effects which flow from it. Every other sin, however degrading and ruinous to the health,

[1] Rom. 6: 13. [2] Rom. 1: 24. [3] 1 Cor. 6: 18.

even drunkenness, is external to the body, that is, external to its life. But fornication, involving as it does a community of life, is a sin against the body itself, because incompatible, as the Apostle had just taught, with the design of its creation, and with its immortal destiny.'

The latter half of the fifth verse strengthens not a little the preceding dissuasives from these fleshly vices as utterly unbecoming the Christian character and calling, by pointing to their prevalence among the Godless heathen: '*not in passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God.*'

The Gentiles '*know not God.*' Sad, humiliating result of all man's unaided speculation, and research into the good and the true! 'The world by wisdom knew not God;'[1] and what matters it, then, what else it knew? Frightful condition, indeed, for a rational and immortal creature of God to be in for an hour: 'without God in the world!'—'alienated from His life'[2]—ignorant of His nature, and His law—with no way of access to His presence—shut out from all filial fellowship with Him—under His wrath—smitten with His curse!

Brethren, it is not strange, when such is the unnatural relation of a man to God, that in all his other relations there should be darkness and disorder. To the Gentile ignorance of God, accordingly, the Apostle here traces the overflowing flood of Gentile sensuality.

[1] 1 Cor. 1:21. [2] Eph. 2:12; 4:18.

And the same connection is made still more apparent in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. There also, we may say, it becomes still more appalling, when we discover it to be a connection not only of natural result, but of direct, righteous retribution. Men dishonoured God, and God allowed them to dishonour themselves. 'Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: . . . and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all . . . fornication.'

And, brethren, it was well that 'they, which from among the Gentiles had turned to God,'[1] should thus be reminded of the abominations, from the midst of which they had been drawn. Nothing was more likely to cherish in them the spirit of humility, of gratitude, and caution. 'And such,' says Paul to the Corinthians, 'such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the

[1] Acts 15 : 19.

Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God.'[1] And to the Ephesians: 'This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, . . . who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ.'[2] And so, wherever the truth of Christ had been received into the heart, the very same change in the habits of the life was at once apparent. Addressing the scattered sojourners throughout Asia Minor, Peter uses this language: 'The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot.'[3] But strange as it seemed, there was a simple and sufficient explanation of it. These sojourners had come to 'know God, or rather,' according to that beautiful self-correction of the Apostle, had been 'known of God.'[4]

Passing on to the sixth verse: '*That no* man *go beyond and defraud his brother in* any *matter: because that the Lord* is *the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified*,' we find here also a great difference of opinion as to what is really meant.

You of course suppose that there is now a change of

[1] 1 Cor. 6: 11. [2] Eph. 4: 17, 19, 20. [3] 1 Pet. 4: 3, 4. [4] Gal. 4: 9.

topic to the duty of honesty in all business transactions with our fellow-men, and such in fact is the interpretation of many. But to this still more object—and, I think, with reason—first, that our common version is not sustained by the original,[1] which, strictly rendered, is not '*in any matter*,' but '*in the matter*,' as you find it in the margin of our English Bible. You will observe also that the word '*any*' is printed in italics, as an intimation that there is nothing for it in the Greek.[2] Then secondly, if you look at the seventh verse, you find that the writer is there still dealing with the sin, not of covetousness or avaricious fraud, but of uncleanness.

On these grounds it is supposed that the sixth verse is nothing more than a carrying forward in another form, and in new relations, of the warning against impurity. Having already denounced offences of that sort as irreconcilable with the will of God, and the personal honour and sanctification of the believer, the Apostle now brands them as no less a wrong to our neighbour. That is to say, the woman is viewed in the associations of home, whether of blood or affinity—as

[1] ἐν τῷ πράγματι.

[2] Accordingly, most of those who adhere to this view do so, not on the ground of τῷ here being the indefinite τῳ (Grotius, Clericus, Turretine, Schöttgen, Schleusner, Koppe, Flatt, Barnes. Of this there is no example in the New Testament.), but because they regard τὸ πρᾶγμα as used generically for τὰ πράγματα, *affairs, business in general*, or else as pointing to *the transaction* on hand at any particular time (Calvin, Musculus, Beza, Piscator, De Wette, Lünemann. This, however, is equally unsustained by usage.).

standing behind her natural guardians, her father, her brother, her husband—and the prohibition is directed against injuring their rights, or depriving her of their protection, by force or by guile: '*that no one go beyond*'—or *transgress*[1] the limits of justice and propriety—'*and defraud in the matter his brother: because*,' it is solemnly added, '*the Lord*'—the Lord Christ Himself—'*is the avenger of all such*'—of all such transgressors,[2] or of those whom they thus injure. It is better, however, to take this clause also a little differently, as, indeed, is done by the great majority of commentators, thus: '*because the Lord is an avenger for*[3] *all these things*,'[4] or offences.

But how, it is asked by such as understand this sixth verse to refer to the practices of a fraudulent covetousness, how could Paul have employed so large a phrase, '*for all these things*,' if he had meant only the single sin specified in the third verse? I answer, that the difficulty is but very little relieved by supposing

[1] *ὑπερβαίνειν* is best taken absolutely. It does not occur again in the New Testament. And, when found elsewhere with a personal object in the accusative, it means *to transcend, surpass, excel*, or *to pass by*, never *to circumvent, overreach* (Benson, Doddridge, Schöttgen, Bloomfield, Barnes), or *to set at nought* (Alford). Alford's objection to the absolute construction, that it would require *τινα* after *ὑπερβαίνειν*, is not valid. As the subject is to be supplied from *ἕκαστον* (*every one*) of v. 4, so the two verbs, *ὑπερβαίνειν* and *πλεονεκτεῖν* run together: *that he—any one—go not over and defraud*, &c.

[2] So Wells, Barnes, Sharpe, Conybeare.

[3] *περί*.

[4] Our Translators followed the Bishops' Bible in cancelling the word *things* of the older versions.

him to intend just *two* sins, namely, uncleanness and covetousness; and that to my own mind it is perfectly natural and satisfactory, to regard both these expressions, *in the matter—all these things*, as euphemistic generalizations for *all sorts of uncleanness.*

Now '*for all these things*'—let a licentious world scoff as it will—'*for all these things the Lord is an avenger.*' He does not overlook them, and in His pure eyes they are not venial trifles. Nor will He forget them, or pass them by. The avenging of them He claims as a Divine and inalienable prerogative. 'Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.' Yes; 'whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.'[1]

You recollect it was this very doctrine of a 'judgment to come,' that formed one cardinal point in Paul's address before Felix; and no doubt it was mainly that, which made the adulterous governor tremble before the Apostle in chains.[2] But everywhere Paul preached it, throughout the realms of sin and death: '*as we also,*' he says with a reference to his personal ministry at Thessalonica, '*forewarned you,*' or *foretold*[3] *you*, '*and testified*'—*fully, earnestly testified.* For the word[4] is one of the strongest. 'Such is the sluggishness of men,' remarks Calvin upon it, 'that without vehement

[1] Eph. 5:6; Heb. 13:4. [2] Acts 24:25. [3] προείπαμεν. [4] διεμαρτυράμεθα.

blows they are touched with no sense of the Divine judgment.'[1]

The certainty and the severity of this judgment, as against these particular sins, and especially when they are found within the house of God, may be inferred from their utter contrariety to the very calling and constitution of the Church. '*For God did not call us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.*'

'*God did not call*[2] *us unto*'—or *for*—'*uncleanness.*' The word[3] properly means *upon;* as if it had been said: 'Such was not the basis—the ground—the terms of the Divine call;' somewhat as we might speak of a man being engaged *on* wages. Every thing of that sort, therefore, should be felt by you to be altogether alien to your standing as Christians.

'*But unto holiness*'—or, *in sanctification.*[4] For the noun is the same as in the third verse. And it may also be doubted, whether the writer was thinking of the final purpose and issue of our 'high calling of God,'[5] so much as of its present character, and of the means and processes whereby it is rendered effectual; such as our actual separation from an unholy world unto the mountain of God's holiness—the 'sanctification of the Spirit' and 'sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ'—or, as it is sometimes expressed, 'the

[1] 'Tanta enim est hominum tarditas, ut nisi acriter perculsi nullo divini judicii sensu tangantur.'

[2] ἐκάλεσεν. [3] ἐπί. [4] ἐν ἁγιασμῷ. [5] Phil. 3: 14.

washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.'[1] Such was our calling;—in itself, as well as in its design and result, 'a holy calling.'[2] Therefore also are the Church's children already 'called saints;'[3] and in all her dwelling-places, and down through all her generations, sounds evermore the voice of God: 'Be ye holy; for I am holy.'[4]

'*He therefore*,' adds the Apostle finally in the eighth verse;—such being God's purpose and methods in calling you into His Church, '*he therefore that despiseth*' —or, *rejecteth*[5] this word of apostolic warning and exhortation, as the unrenewed heart will be very apt to do—'*despiseth*'—*rejecteth*—'*not man, but God.*' The former were a small thing, and a safe thing, to do. But what if the wilful transgressor finds himself in immediate, personal conflict with God?—'*who*,' when He called us, '*also gave*[6] *His Holy Spirit unto us*,' to the very end that we might know, and love, and declare, and execute His will. What an aggravation, then, of sin in the household of faith—of all sin—and especially of such sin—is this, whether you understand the Holy Spirit here as given to the Apostles for their special guidance in the ministration of the truth, or—which I think better—to the Church, as including Apostles—the Body of Christ, instinct with His life.[7]

[1] 1 Pet. 1 : 2; Tit. 3 : 5. [2] 2 Tim. 1 : 9. [3] Rom. 1 : 7; 1 Cor. 1: 2.
[4] Lev. 11 : 44; 1 Pet. 1 : 16. [5] *ἀθετῶν*. [6] *τὸν καὶ δόντα*.
[7] In either case the *ἡμᾶς* (*us*) is emphatic by position.

Into this same momentous and most responsible position you too, my hearers, have been brought. In it as many of you as have been baptized into Christ live, and move, and have your being. God forbid, that any one of you should perish in it! Have you, then, 'escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust?'[1] Are you a holy people? Is holiness your daily aim? the growing desire of your hearts? the growing attainment of your life? Or to the condemnation of nature is any member of this church, member whether by baptism or by profession, adding the far heavier condemnation of abused grace? Remember that solemn word of an Apostle of Christ: 'If, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.'[2]

And, dear friends, think not you are safe, because you cannot reproach yourselves with the viler immoralities of the world. Do you believe in Christ? Do you glory in His cross? Or do you lightly esteem the Rock of our salvation? When the Lord Himself shall appear as the Avenger, be assured that that man shall not escape, who, however decorous, however useful, may

[1] 2 Pet. 1 : 4. [2] 2 Pet. 2 : 20, 21.

have been his life in the world's estimation, has still hardened his heart, when he has not also stopped his ears, against every warning and appeal of God's word and servants, and has even struggled—successfully struggled—against the Spirit's gracious hand, that would have drawn him to the cross.

LECTURE XVI.

I. Thess. 4 : 9–12.—'But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing.'

The writer here takes up another topic, and that one of primary importance; to wit, '*brotherly love*,' or what Peter calls 'love of the brethren'[1]—the mutual love of those who, realizing their spiritual kindred in the family of God, feel that in this very relation to one Father, which constitutes them brethren, lies an inexhaustible spring of love. 'Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him.'[2]

And there are other motives; such as *Christ's authority*—His new, and oft-repeated commandment: 'These things I command you, that ye love one another;'[3] as if all other things were included in that;—*Christ's example;* and to this our Lord himself again and again appeals: 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you,

[1] 1 Pet. 1 : 22. [2] 1 John 5 : 1. [3] John 15 : 17.

that ye also love one another.' 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.' The Apostles likewise refer continually to the same consideration: 'Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us;'[1] —this, indeed, seems to have been the burden of their ministerial address. And then *Christ's glory* in the world is intimately involved in this matter: 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' And in His prayer to the Father He speaks of the perfected unity of the Church, as the necessary preliminary and condition of the world's faith.[2] It need scarcely be added, that the *prosperity and growth of the Church* itself are no less dependent on the brotherly love of her members. As it is the indispensable evidence of their regeneration: 'He that loveth not, knoweth not God'—'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren'[3]—so is it equally essential to their spiritual health and efficiency. 'If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.' Whereas when 'the whole body'—to use Paul's language to the Ephesians—'maketh increase of the body,' this will ever be found to be an 'edifying of itself in love.'[4]

And in what way, brethren, shall this excellent spirit of the disciples, thus nourished and strengthened as it is by motives so numerous and powerful—in what way

[1] John 13: 34; 15: 12; Eph. 5: 2. [2] John 13: 35; 17: 21.
[3] 1 John 4: 8; 3: 14. [4] Gal. 5: 15; Eph. 4: 16.

shall it show itself? I answer: In all our intercourse with our brethren, and in all that we say or do concerning them;—'in honour preferring one another'—supplying, as we have opportunity, one another's need—'bearing one another's burdens'—'forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any'—and, even when required to rebuke a brother's faults, so as not to 'suffer sin upon him,' doing that also in love. 'Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.' Yea, says the Apostle John: 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.'[1]

Such, then, in its nature, motives, and manifestation, is the love here spoken of. And '*concerning*'[2] all this the Thessalonians, Paul testifies, '*had no need that one should write*[3] *unto them: for*,' says he, '*ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.*' They 'had an unction from the Holy One, and they knew all things.'[4] This great lesson especially of brotherly love they had

[1] Rom. 12: 10; 1 John 3: 16, 17; Gal. 6: 2; Col. 3: 13; Lev. 19: 17; 1 Cor. 13: 4–7.

[2] περί. [3] οὐ χρείαν ἔχετε γράφειν. [4] 1 John 2: 20.

learned, not only from the lips and the example of the Apostle, but from that Divine working in their own hearts, which alone 'teacheth to profit,'[1] any truth or duty of the gospel. And hence they had learned it, not so much as a doctrine or a law, as the very life and joy of their souls—the ornament and crown of their Christian profession.

Their proficiency in this Divine love they had shown by their deeds—by that 'toil of love,' which is commemorated in the beginning of the Epistle as among the first fruits of their conversion. '*And indeed ye do it*'—or, *for ye also*[2] *do it*. In regard to this thing, I say, ye have been divinely instructed; and the proof is, that ye *also* act accordingly—'*toward all the brethren that are in the whole of Macedonia*,' and not merely to your own immediate, personal friends and neighbours in your own particular congregation; but '*toward all the brethren*'—even those of them, whose faces you have not seen in the flesh—'*that are in the whole of Macedonia*,'[3] as at Philippi on one side of you, and Berea on the other. It is enough for you to know that they are '*brethren*,' and that, in this time of general conflict and trial for the children of God, they need your sympathy and succour. Straightway your hearts devise, and, at whatever sacrifice or risk to yourselves, your hands as promptly execute, 'liberal things'[4] for

[1] Is. 48 : 17. [2] καὶ γάρ. [3] τοὺς ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ.
[4] Is. 32 : 8.

their relief. There can therefore be little use in my writing, or any one writing, to you on this theme.

'*But we beseech you*'—or *exhort you*—'*brethren, to increase*'—or, as the same word is given in the first verse and elsewhere, *to abound*—'*yet more.*'[1] The great Apostle still longs for their perfecting, and cannot be satisfied, and is unwilling that they should be, with any thing short of that. He had already besought God in regard to their 'increasing and abounding in love;' and now, since they themselves must coöperate in the work of their own spiritual improvement, he once more presses upon them 'the word of exhortation.'[2]

It is very pleasant to know that the word was not in vain. Several years after this, in the second Epistle to the Corinthians (8 : 1, 2) we find this striking additional testimony to what may be called the Macedonian grace of liberality: 'Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia' (and no doubt on this of Thessalonica among the rest); 'how that, in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.' Indeed, this latter instance is the more beautiful and instructive, that the effort—if so we can call what was rather a spontaneous outgushing of all the richest and noblest affections of the renewed nature—was made in behalf not even of fellow-countrymen, but of those belonging to another

[1] παρακαλοῦμεν . . . περισσεύειν μᾶλλον. [2] Heb. 13 : 22.

nation and another race—the poor saints of Judea. Ah, brethren, the love of Christ, far more even than any 'touch of nature, makes the whole world kin.' And not until the love of Christ has thoroughly pervaded and subdued earth's teeming myriads, shall that warmest prayer of Scotland's poet be fulfilled, when

> 'Man to man the warld o'er,
> 'Shall brothers be for a' that.'

How remarkably this spirit prevailed in the early martyr-ages, Church history joyfully records, and that on the testimony even of the Church's foes. 'It is incredible,' says the scoffing Lucian,[1] in the second century, 'It is incredible to see the ardour with which the people of that religion help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator has put it into their heads that they are all brethren.'

In closest connection with this great interest of an ever-growing brotherly love, come exhortations no less earnest to a quiet industry in one's own private affairs: '*And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.*'

'*That ye study to be quiet;*'—the expression is evidently a curious one, and in the original it is still more so. Many render it, according to the etymological force of the Greek word,[2] *and that ye be ambitious—make*

[1] *De morte Peregr.* c. 13—quoted by Schaff, *Hist. of the Christian Church*, p. 340.

[2] φιλοτιμεῖσθαι.

it your ambition to be quiet. In the New Testament it occurs in but two other places, and in both the same suggestion of the *point of honour* is quite apparent. Rom. 15 : 20, 'Yea, so *have I strived* to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named;' that is, My ambition, as an Apostle, has been to preach Christ where He was never preached before. And so in the other text, 2 Cor. 5 : 9, 'Wherefore *we labour*'—this is all our desire, the height of our ambition—'that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.' In like manner, what the Apostle means in the present case is really this: '*and that ye esteem it an honour—that it be your ambition—to be quiet.*'

This, you are aware, brethren, is by no means the spirit of the world; and unhappily it is not always the spirit of religious professors. Not a few of these dread nothing so much as being quiet. Their delight and glory is in keeping up a perpetual stir about some poor trifle or another; and, if the stir can only be pushed, and quickened, and exasperated into a general war, why then, indeed, they are in their element. Not that they deliberately wish to do mischief. The difficulty with them is rather, sometimes at least, a total absence of the deliberative faculty with regard to any thing—a simple incapacity to sit still; and with this there is commonly joined a horror of being forgotten, or, at any rate, not sufficiently talked about, by their neighbours;—reasons enough, why they should devote themselves to bustle, and be ever, as we say, *on the go.*

People will then be compelled to take notice of their existence, and even those who are unable, or who refuse, to run around with them, will have to nod to them as they pass, and perhaps pay them the further compliment of hurrying to get out of their way. Are they not church members? And, for their part, they mean to be active members, and useful ones, were it only in keeping others to their duty. For, of course, this impudent, pragmatical humour will be very apt to assume the guise of a superior religious zeal. And then, to be sure, let all concerned see to themselves. Minister, and elder, and deacon, and trustee, and chorister, and Sabbath School superintendent, and Sabbath School teacher—nay, every single member of the church would do well to know that he has got at least one other pair of eyes fixed on him always, and that he had need to be something quite equal to an angel, if he would escape the detection of some serious flaw in his life and conversation—or, to say the very least, some defect, or some mistake, or some imprudence, that nothing will be so likely to repair as a hot whisper—and then a multiplication of whispers—and finally, as big a noise as possible. Were a Paul himself to meet one of these model Christians—these stormy petrels—flying about the streets on his voluntary mission of impertinence and reform, and calmly, kindly say to him: 'Sir, I think you had better go home, and study to be quiet'—that, I fear, would just be the worst offence of all.

It would appear that some restless tendencies had already discovered themselves at Thessalonica; though I doubt not they were far more respectable—certainly less contemptible—both in their origin, and in their working, than those which so often prove to be the pest and nuisance of churches in our day. The sudden and absolute revolution in the views, and feelings, and social position of those primitive converts—the very fervour of their first love itself—might easily have an unsettling effect on some minds, indisposing them for the stale, dull routine of their former occupations. And the danger, you can readily conceive, would be not a little enhanced, if, as in fact we know to have been the case at Thessalonica, and in the apostolic churches generally, the suffering disciples were eagerly expecting the speedy return of their Lord, and their own speedy introduction into the rest and glory of His kingdom. In these circumstances the temptation was strong to an enthusiastic extravagance, and a sort of spiritual dissipation.

Mark now again how the evil is met by this 'wise masterbuilder'[1] of the house of God: '*and that ye study*'—*make it your ambition*—'*to be quiet, and to do your own business*'—for the quietness I speak of is not idleness. Only see that the business you do is *your* business, and that you let that of your neighbours alone. Love them, indeed, more and more; but do not think to show your love by becoming 'a busybody in other men's mat-

[1] 1 Cor. 3: 10.

ters.'[1] Attend to your own, and you will have enough to do. Theirs you cannot attend to, with any profit either to yourselves, or to them. 'To their own Master they stand or fall; yea, they shall be holden up: for God is able to make them stand.'[2] Meanwhile, set them a good example by simply '*doing your own business;*' and *then*, if they neglect or mismanage theirs, you will not be answerable for the failure. Nor does it matter what your business is; so it be an honest one, stick to it. 'Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.'[3] You may have, and in most cases I know that you have, to earn your daily bread by your daily labour. Very well, then; hold steadily on doing so; '*work with your own hands, as we commanded you.*' Should the Lord even come, and find you with the sweat of toil on your brow, you will suffer neither loss nor shame thereby. Nay, 'blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing.'[4]

This charge of diligence in one's daily business the Apostle took frequent occasion to inculcate on his converts. We shall find it repeated in a much sterner tone in the Second Epistle.

The motives, by which it is here enforced, are these two: the credit of the Christian name outside of the Church, and the prospect of an honourable independence. '*That ye may walk honestly*'—that is,

[1] 1 Pet. 4 : 15. [2] Rom. 14 : 4. [3] 1 Cor. 7 : 20. [4] Matt. 24 : 46.

decently, becomingly—'*toward those without*'[1] — 'giving none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully'[2] —'*and may have need of nothing.*'[3]

Still another motive, you may remember, is oftener than once urged by our Apostle elsewhere. 'Yea, ye yourselves know,' said he to the Ephesian elders, 'that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.'[4] And in the Epistle to that church he again brings forward the same eminently Christian thought: 'Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.' My dear hearers, how would this consideration, as often as it were allowed a place in your hearts, shed the light of love, and the dignity and joy of beneficence, on your daily path, and on every lowliest labour of your hands!

In conclusion, I shall add but this one word. It is not mine, beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord, to judge you. But it may lead some that hear me to renewed and profitable searching of heart at the cross and before the mercyseat, if I do venture to express

[1] *εὐσχημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω.* [2] 1 Tim. 5 : 14.

[3] The marginal interpretation, *of no man*, is adopted by the Syriac, Luther, Benson, Flatt, Schott, Olshausen, De Wette, Bloomfield, &c.

[4] Acts 20: 34, 35.

my fear, that it could not with truth, or without considerable qualification, be said to this church, even after all your common trials, and dangers, and deliverances: 'Concerning brotherly love ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.' But if so, there is the more urgent need that ye 'repent, and do the first works,' lest, as the sad end of all, the Lord 'come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.'[1] Remember that, if you would either attain to the perfection, or enjoy the good comfort, to which you are called in the fellowship of Christ's Church, it is required of you that you 'be of one mind, and live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.'[2]

[1] Rev. 2: 5. [2] 2 Cor. 13: 11.

LECTURE XVII.

I. Thess. 4: 13, 14.—'But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.'

Nowhere does fallen man, while yet unvisited by the light of revelation, so deeply feel, and so readily avow, his ruin and helplessness as in the presence of death, and among the sepulchres of the departed. To him that whole region is one of blank horror and despair—a starless midnight—a pathless, unwatered wilderness, without herbage, without a flower—'a land of darkness, as darkness itself . . . without any order, and where the light is as darkness.'[1]

It is not, then, strange, brethren, that before this great terror nature has ever sunk down appalled, or uttered her grief in the vain violence of shrieks, and howls, and unrestrained lamentations. Such, accordingly, were the ordinary manifestations at the funeral rites of the heathen; and it is still very sad to mark the dismal gloom that meets us everywhere in that direction

[1] Job 10: 22.

throughout their literature, quenching even the festive gaiety of their lyric poets, and brooding in monumental woe over their unblessed graves.

Nor was Judaism itself ever quite redeemed from this natural dread of death, or from the cheerless desolation of bereavement. 'Our Saviour Jesus Christ' it is, 'who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel'[1]—immortal life for the body, as well as for the soul. The distinctive hope of the Church is now the hope of the resurrection, and the glory that shall follow. In whatever breast that hope shines, and according to the measure of its brightness, it brings deliverance from the fear of man's last enemy, and 'a strong consolation' for the loss of friends who 'die in the Lord.'[2] In all such cases death is no longer bewailed as an eternal separation. It is rather a falling '*asleep*'—a temporary slumber, watched over by the gentlest charities of earth, and the kindliest influences of the heavens—a much needed rest from labour, and precursor of a glad awaking, and an everlasting reunion, amidst the freshness and songs of the morning.

What, then, you may ask, was the difficulty at Thessalonica? For when it is said in the thirteenth verse: '*But I would*[3] *not have you to be ignorant, brethren, con-*

[1] 2 Tim. 1: 10. [2] Heb. 6: 18; Rev. 14: 13.
[3] *θέλομεν, we would,* is now the generally received reading.

cerning them which are asleep,[1] *that ye sorrow not,'—that ye may not sorrow*[2]—'*even as others*'—*the others*[3]—the rest of mankind—that large class, to which all around you belong—'*which have no hope*'—no hope for eternity—no hope beyond the grave—we must infer, I think, that the writer was aware of some danger of a relapse into an excessive, heathenish sorrow for the death even of Christians; a tendency which, he is sure, nothing more is required to correct, than that they should know the exact truth in regard to them. Not that the Apostle either expected, or desired, that any increase of knowledge would stifle the sensibilities of nature, or dry up the fountain of tears, and transform the patience of faith and the consolation of hope into a callous, stoical apathy. But he does intimate that it would save them from being 'swallowed up with overmuch sorrow,' and that the sorrow of the Church, in this the sharpest trial of humanity, should show itself to be, in character and in measure, a very different thing from 'the sorrow of the world.'[4]

On what point, then, I again ask, were the views of the Thessalonians, in regard to the prospects of the departed, at this time defective? There is no ground whatever for supposing, that they denied or doubted the general doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, as

[1] For κεκοιμημένων, *have fallen asleep and so continue*, Lachmann, Tischendorf and Alford read κοιμωμένων, *are sleeping*, or, *are* from time to time *falling asleep*.

[2] ἵνα μὴ λυπῆσθε. [3] οἱ λοιποί. [4] 2 Cor. 2: 7; 7: 10.

we know to have been the case with some at Corinth.[1] And as little do we find any indication, in this First Epistle at least, of their having been disturbed by any such heresy as that of Hymeneus and Philetus, who 'said that the resurrection was past already, and overthrew the faith of some'[2] of the early converts. The trouble at Thessalonica, it is evident, originated rather in the church's misapprehension of the chronological relation of the resurrection of the saints to the appearing and kingdom of the Lord.

You must ever remember, my hearers, if you would understand the spirit either of the apostolic writings or of the apostolic churches, that at that time the expectation of the Saviour's second personal coming was a far more real, present, practical interest in the communion of the faithful, than it is with us. 'Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come'—'Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh;'—such, as I formerly showed you,[3] is the uniform style of primitive teaching on that topic; in place of which we have now got the very unequal substitutes of death, and preparation for death. And not only so; but, along with this uncertainty as to 'the times or the seasons'—the 'day and hour'—there was in that Pentecostal period such an intense longing in the Christian heart for the Saviour's return, as would be very apt to interpret somewhat too definitely the many, harmonious, inspired announcements

[1] 1 Cor. 15: 12. [2] 2 Tim. 2: 17, 18. [3] See pages 134–9.

that the consummation would not be long delayed. The eager 'thought' of the Apostles themselves, while the Lord was yet with them, and before His crucifixion, 'that the kingdom of God should immediately appear,' [1] can scarcely be said to have been dislodged even from their hearts by 'the power of the resurrection,' [2] or the glory of the ascension. It is the less to be wondered at, if, in churches gathered by their ministry, and pervaded by their spirit, the anticipations of hope were in some instances marked by a precipitate enthusiasm, and love grew impatient.

Now, the idea that perplexed and distressed the Thessalonians seems to have been something of this sort; that, when the Lord came, their deceased friends would be found to have suffered serious loss, in that, while they would ultimately, no doubt, be raised again, they would yet have no part in the joy of welcoming Him back to His inheritance of the redeemed earth, and in the triumphant inauguration of His reign. The songs of the living saints would mingle with the acclamations of angels, as, clad in 'the visible robes of His imperial majesty,' [3] the Saviour-King took His seat on His blood-bought throne. But what if in the rapture of that hour, and for ages after, the lowly tenants of the tombs should be forgotten alike by all, and no beam from the crown of Jesus—no thrill of ecstasy of the new creation—should reach death's dark domain! Would not this be

[1] Luke 19: 11. [2] Phil. 3: 10.
[3] Milton, *Animadversions*, sect. 4.

for the time, and so long as it lasted, all one as if 'they also which had fallen asleep in Christ were perished'?[1] Certainly by a church so full of the bright prospect of Christ's coming kingdom, as was this of Thessalonica, it could not be regarded as any common calamity. It was just as if, on the very eve of the day of the expected return of some long absent father, a cruel fate should single out one fond, expectant child, and hurry him to a far distant and inhospitable shore.

It was therefore, as I conceive, for the sake of meeting and dissipating such thoughts and regrets as these, that the servant of Christ was instructed to make the disclosures contained in the present section, and you will not fail to remark as we proceed, how admirably adapted they are to that specific purpose.

'*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.*'

Here it is taken for granted that '*Jesus died and arose*'[2] —these two facts being the very foundations of the gospel, and of all good hope toward God. If Christ was not 'delivered for our offences'—or if, having 'once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God,' He was not 'raised again for our justification'[3]—in either case no redemption has been wrought out for us, and 'we are yet in our sins.'[4] But no; the Lamb of God died on Calvary, and now lives, though

[1] 1 Cor. 15: 18. [2] *ἀνέστη.* [3] Rom. 4: 25; 1 Pet. 3: 18. [4] 1 Cor. 15: 17.

bearing still 'the marks of recent slaughter,'[1] on the Mount Zion of the 'Jerusalem which is above.'[2] So far at least, the Apostle seems to say, our faith is clear, and certain, and unanimous. And you will at the same time observe that it is also assumed here, as a thing equally well understood among Christians, that their Lord will come again from the Father's right hand.

These things being regarded as settled, and as requiring no further statement or corroboration in the Church of God, there is now added to them the blessed assurance that, when God 'shall send Jesus Christ,'[3] He will '*with Him*' bring also the sleeping saints. Let your faith in that point, as if the writer had said, be as firm and unfaltering as in all the rest. For then will be the fulfilment of that prophecy of Zechariah (14 : 5) : 'And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints *with thee;*' and of Enoch's more ancient vision : 'Behold, the Lord came *with* His holy myriads.'[4] All which, of course, implies the previous resurrection of the holy dead ; and that, as it were simultaneously with the opening of the heavens for the descent of Jesus, their graves likewise shall open, and they shall come forth to swell his retinue, and to share His triumph. Not only, therefore, is Christ, as 'risen from the dead, become the first fruits of them that slept ;'[5] but the hour of His own future manifestation is the very hour, when the harvest of glory shall be gathered.

[1] Robert Hall, *Sermon on Rev.* 5: 6. [2] Gal. 4 : 26.
[3] Acts 3: 20. [4] Jude 14, ἦλθε κύριος ἐν ἁγίαις μυριάσιν αὐτοῦ.
[5] 1 Cor. 15 : 20.

That they who 'die in the Lord' shall be 'brought with Him' in the day of His second advent—brought, not as invisible ghosts or disembodied spirits, but as men—complete men—perfected, glorified men—such is the leading general announcement of the text; which the subsequent verses then open up and illustrate in a variety of most interesting details.

Meanwhile, however, it may well be questioned whether the expression in this fourteenth verse, '*them which sleep in Jesus*,' beautiful though it be, is an accurate representation of the original. The idea, indeed, is a perfectly scriptural one. Thus, not only does the passage just referred to in the book of Revelation speak of 'dying in the Lord,' and the sixteenth verse here of 'the dead in Christ,' but in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians Paul certainly employs this very phrase, 'they which are fallen asleep in Christ.' And the thought suggested by such language is, I need not say, most precious to the believer. They that 'die in the Lord'—in the faith of Christ, and in union with Him—'*sleep in Jesus*.' That union survives the stroke of dissolution, and is unharmed by the corruption of the grave. 'Absent from the body,' the living, conscious spirit is 'present with the Lord;'[1] and even the dishonoured dust which it left behind, having itself also been 'made a partaker of Christ'—'of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones'[2]—abides still within the securities of the everlasting covenant, and is watched over by the eyes of

[1] 2 Cor. 5: 8. [2] Heb. 3: 14; Eph. 5: 30.

redeeming love. Thus guarded and safe in all the interests that pertain to him as a human being, while resting from his toils, and awaiting the summons to higher and holier and more blissful service in the day of Christ, the believer, when he dies, though it be, like Stephen, beneath the hand of violence, 'falls asleep'[1]—'*sleeps in Jesus*'—sleeps, as Noah slept, in the ark of God—as sleeps the tender, helpless babe, amid its bright dreams, on the mother's breast that bore it, and nursed it, and can never cease to 'have compassion on the son of her womb.'[2]

All this, I repeat, is true, and it is most blessed truth. Nevertheless, it is proper that you should be apprised, that the Apostle's phrase in the present instance is not precisely equivalent to those on which I have been commenting, and is, accordingly, quite otherwise construed and explained by perhaps the majority of interpreters. Strictly rendered, the clause might be given thus: '*so also*[3] *those fallen asleep*'—or, *those who fell asleep*[4]—'*will God through Jesus bring with Him.*'[5] In other words, it is the will of God, that, 'when He bringeth in again the Firstbegotten into the world,'[6] the rest of His children that have tasted of death shall

[1] Acts 7: 60. [2] Is. 49: 15.

[3] *οὕτω καί*. The *καί* (*also*) belongs, not especially to *τοὺς κοιμηθέντας* (*those fallen asleep*), but to the whole clause.

[4] The aorist here (*κοιμηθέντας*), and at v. 15, implies a backward look from the time of the resurrection, when of each one of the departed it may be said, as of Stephen (Acts 7: 60); *ἐκοιμήθη*.

[5] *διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἄξει σὺν αὐτῷ*.

[6] Heb. 1: 6, *ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ*.

be brought with Him ; and since, in order to this, it is needful that they be raised from the dead, He will effect that also '*through Jesus*'—the quickening of the dead being one of those great works of God, which the Father showeth the Son. Christ Himself is the resurrection, not only as He revealed it in His word, and exemplified it in His own person, but likewise because He is ordained of God to effect it by His power. 'For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God : and they that hear shall live. . . . And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.'[1] Such was our Lord's explicit and reiterated testimony on this topic ; and hence the firm, calm assurance of the Church, as expressed by our Apostle in another place, 'that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.'[2]

[1] John 5 : 20, 21, 25, 28, 29 ; 6 : 39.

[2] 2 Cor. 4 : 14. It may deserve mention that some, who adhere to the construction of our Common Version, would yet allow the Greek preposition its proper force, when followed by a genitive. But the result can scarcely be deemed satisfactory. Thus, Musculus : 'The faithful die through Christ (*per Christum*), when on His account they are slain by the impious tyrants of this world.' (Lünemann justly objects, that such a special reference to martyrs is unsuitable to the Apostle's immediate object, and is not sustained by any thing in these two Epistles.) Scott : 'Death was become only a sleep *through* Jesus'—a suggestion first made, I think, by Michaelis, and since adopted also by Barnes and Alford. Rev. A. R. Fausset, in the translation of Bengel's *Gnomon :* 'Lit. *Those lulled to sleep by Jesus.*'

From the two verses that have now been examined let us learn still farther,

1. In the first place, that ignorance of the truth and purposes of God, so far as these have been revealed to us, must ever be injurious to our spiritual comfort and edification. 'I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren,' is a very frequent formula, you will find, with the inspired writers. Whereas you greatly mistake, if you suppose that it is only Papists that seem to lay rather more stress on just the opposite policy. And no doubt it is true enough, that ignorance, if not the mother of devotion, may fairly be credited with no small proportion of the religionism of our day. Depend upon it, my hearers, if, in coming to church, and lending your support in any form to the institutions of the gospel, your desire really is to 'grow in grace,' then, so far from hindering, it will essentially further, the fulfilment of your object, if at the same time your aim shall also be, by prayer and meditation of the Scriptures, to 'grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'[1]—of His person and character, and work past, present and future.

2. In the second place, I ask you again to mark the sad condition of the heathen. They '*have no hope*'—nothing that deserves the name of hope—no hope of resurrection—no hope of victory over death and the grave—no hope of eternal life. 'A man once dead,

[1] 2 Pet. 3 : 18.

there is no revival,' said an old Greek poet ;[1] and in that dismal word he but gave utterance to the despair of unenlightened nature in all lands and in all ages. What, then, shall be said of the piety or the Christian intelligence of the man or the church, that feels no interest—refuses to take any part—in the urgent work of evangelizing the perishing nations—of proclaiming the gospel of 'the Resurrection and the Life'[2] throughout the great Golgotha of this ruined earth?

But alas, alas, are there not hopeless souls even in this Christian assembly? They have grown up, it may be, in Christian families ;—have lived all their days within sight of Christ's cross, and open sepulchre ;—and still they have no hope. From time to time, 'before their eyes Jesus Christ is evidently set forth, crucified among them,'[3] in the broken bread and the cup of blessing. But on these memorials of the 'decease' that was 'accomplished at Jerusalem'[4] they coldly turn their backs, or they look on from a distance, as at some strange spectacle with which they have no concern—honestly at least avowing that they 'have no hope'—no hope in Christ—no hope toward God—no hope of immortality.

Or are there any of you—saddest case of all!—whose hope is 'the hypocrite's hope,' which 'shall perish'?[5] or the self-deceived formalist's hope? or the hope of

[1] Æschylus, *Eumen.* 647–8:

ἀνδρὸς δ' ἐπειδὰν αἷμ' ἀναπάσῃ κόνις
ἅπαξ θανόντος, οὔτις ἔστ' ἀνάστασις.

[2] John 11 : 25. [3] Gal. 3 : 1. [4] Luke 9 : 31. [5] Job 8 : 13.

the worldling? or of the mere doctrinal disputant? or of the uncharitable professor—the relentless, unforgiving hater of his brother?

Be the case what it may—no hope, or a false hope—behold,

3. Finally, the only remedy—the only safety—the only sure and inexhaustible source of true hope and consolation for us all! That is not, I again and again warn you—and there are very many among us, and all around, who have infinite need of the warning—it is not feeling, nor excitement, nor tears, nor noise, nor terror, nor ecstasy. All these the heathen have, and they never yet saved a single soul; while they have deluded and destroyed tens of thousands, who have rested in them as the sufficient tests of regeneration and conversion. No, dear hearers, it is now what it was in the beginning;—it is the sinner's going forth from himself, his own poor defiled works, and his own poor perishable emotions, and simply casting himself, with all his sins and sorrows and weaknesses, at the feet, and into the arms, of the Redeemer. For what is that but *faith*?—faith in the supernatural revelation of God—faith in God's well-beloved and incarnate Son, as dying, and rising, and coming again? This, and this alone, is that which justifies the ungodly, and sanctifies the saved—'cleansing us from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit'[1]—strengthening us for every duty—comfort-

[1] 2 Cor. 7: 1.

ing us in every trial—and binding us in loving, holy, indissoluble fellowship, not only with every saint on earth, but with all 'them which are asleep.' 'Only believe,' said Christ.[1] 'If we believe,' says Paul. You may have churches without debt—you may have popular preaching—you may have crowded congregations, and a growing membership, and superfluous gold in the treasury;—but if you have not withal, as the spring of all, this precious faith of God's elect reigning in the heart, and overcoming the world[2]—then, dear brethren in the Lord, while you will very certainly be saying with loathed Laodicea: 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,' behold, in the sight of 'the Amen, the faithful and true Witness,' you are 'wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.'[3]

[1] Mark 5 : 36. [2] 2 Pet. 1 : 1; Tit. 1 : 1; 1 John 5 : 4.
[3] Rev. 3 : 14, 17.

LECTURE XVIII.

I. Thess. 4 : 15–18.—'For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'

We have already seen that the joy of the Thessalonians in the hope of the Lord's coming was at this time clouded with anxious misgivings about the fate of their deceased friends. Not that they had any doubts as to the fact of an ultimate resurrection of all the dead. The fear was, that the sleeping saints might have no share in the glory of the advent and the kingdom. To correct this misapprehension, and so relieve the undue sorrow of his brethren, the Apostle had declared in the fourteenth verse that, believing in the Saviour's death, resurrection, and expected return, they might count with equal certainty on the return along with Him, and, of course, on the previous resurrection, of those whose death they now mourned. It is this statement which

in the verses before us he goes on to enforce, first, by an authoritative denial that in the day of Christ's appearing the living disciples shall have any advantage whatever of precedence over the departed; and then by unfolding the several steps of the process, whereby every thing of that sort shall be precluded.

'*For this we say unto you*'—*you* Christians, as 'worthy to know this;'[1] *you* sorrowing Christians, as needing to know it—'*by the word of the Lord*,' or, *in*[2] *the word of the Lord*. It does not appear that Paul here refers to any previous disclosure of Holy Writ—none such can be found;—nor yet, as others have supposed, to some traditional saying of the Master. It is much better to regard this as one of the many occasions on which he was empowered to deliver to the Church what he himself had received from the Lord by special, direct revelation; just as when in a parallel passage, the illustrious Fifteenth of first Corinthians, he suddenly exclaims: 'Behold, I show you a mystery'[3]—something that has hitherto been concealed, and is now made known by God to His children. There the point was, that all of Christ's people should not die, but all should be changed, before entering on the possession of their royal inheritance. Here it is, that those of them who shall then be alive shall not have the start of those in their graves: '*We which are alive* and *remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which*

[1] Bengel: 'hoc nosse dignis.' [2] ἐν. [3] 1 Cor. 15: 51.

are asleep'—shall in no wise precede,[1] or *anticipate, those fallen asleep,*—or, *who fell asleep*[2]— shall be no sooner than they introduced into the joy of our common Lord.

Observe, brethren, the description of the two classes: '*those fallen asleep*'—a figure already explained in our last lecture: and '*we which are alive* and *remain,*' or, according to a more literal rendering, *we who are living, who are being left over*[3]—to wit, from the ravages of death—'*unto the coming of the Lord.*' To the one or the other of these classes belong all Christians, down to the time of the Lord's '*coming,*' and until then there is also a continual passing over of the members of the latter class into the former. For that the Apostle had no thought of teaching, that this process was arrested when he wrote these words, so that he and those whom he addressed might consider themselves secure, all or any of them, against dissolution, may be inferred, I think, from the very form of the original phrase; the present participle implying that this remnant of *the left over* was not then defined, but in the course of formation, however the individuals composing it might change from day to day.

Nor is it any valid objection to this view, that the writer might seem to include himself in this latter class: '*We the living, who are being left over unto the coming of the Lord.*' Paul's wont is, to identify himself in inter-

[1] *οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν.* [2] See p. 251, note 4.

[3] *ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι.* The last word is peculiar, occurring nowhere else in the New Testament but in this context.

est and destiny with all believers ; sometimes, as here, with the living, sometimes with the departed. An example of the latter kind you have in 2 Cor. 4:14, 'Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you ;' and another of both kinds is furnished by the words in First Corinthians previously referred to : 'We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed.' He speaks, that is to say, in the name of the whole Church—as one with her, and sympathizing in all her varied fortunes. Just so an American citizen might say : 'To-day we are thirty millions : a hundred years hence we shall be more than a hundred millions,' without at all intending to intimate that he expected to live so long. It is, therefore, a very hasty and unwarranted inference which some have drawn from such expressions, that the Apostle had really deceived himself into a confident belief that he should survive till the consummation.

Now, it is true that, as a fallible man, he might very easily be deceived on that, or any other matter, respecting which he had not been commissioned to convey Christ's instructions to the Church. Nor is our faith in his actual teachings in the least perplexed by this admitted possibility. But, however earnestly Paul and all his peers cherished in their own hearts the Saviour's promise of His speedy return, and longed for its fulfilment ;—with whatever tenderness and emphasis they kept repeating that promise in the ear of the Church ;—nay, little as they appear to have known respecting the

length of the intervening period, and vigilant as for that reason they were, and would have the Church to be, in preparation for that day;—there is still no warrant, so far as I know, for the assertion, that any one of these stewards of the Divine mysteries positively expected that he 'should not die,' or ever intimated that he did. The utmost that can be said is, that they may not have certainly known but that their Lord 'willed that they should tarry till He came.'[1] Such a state of uncertainty and consequent watchfulness would no doubt be confirmed by all that they had learned, and were charged to teach, of Christ's coming as near. It is, in fact, the legitimate and normal attitude of the Christian mind in regard to this subject in all ages. 'The whole doctrine,' says a late distinguished commentator,[2] 'would not even have the least practical significance, if the longing for Christ's return were not every moment active, because viewing the event also as continually possible.' Or take Calvin's remark on this verse: 'His' (the Apostle's) 'aim is to rouse the expectation of the Thessalonians, and so to hold all the pious in suspense, that they shall not count on any delay whatever. For even supposing him to have known himself by special revelation, that Christ would come somewhat later, still this was to be delivered as the common doctrine of the Church, that the faithful might be ready at all hours.'[3] And in the same spirit,

[1] John 21: 22, 23. [2] Olshausen.

[3] 'Eo vult Thessalonicenses in exspectationem erigere, adeoque pios

precisely, is the beautiful comment of Bengel: '*The living, and they who survive to the coming of the Lord*, are the same: and these are distinguished by the pronoun *we*. Each several generation, at whatever period existing, occupies during that period the position of those, who shall be alive at the Lord's coming.'[1]

In the next two verses the writer confirms and illustrates by a more detailed recital what he had stated generally in regard to the simultaneous entrance of all saints, the living and the dead, into the glory of the kingdom.

'*For the Lord Himself*'—no phantom, no providential substitute, not even the vicarious Spirit: but '*the Lord Himself*'—the personal Lord—'this same Jesus'[2]—'*shall descend from heaven*,' which 'must receive'[3] Him till then; and whither shall He direct His course but toward the same dear earth to which He descended before, and where His loved ones now are, some sleeping in Him, the rest waiting for Him? Very different, however, shall be the attendant circumstances, and the results, of this future advent.

omnes tenere suspensos, ne sibi tempus aliquod promittant. Nam ut demus ipsum ex peculiari revelatione scivisse venturum aliquanto serius Christum, hanc tamen Ecclesiæ communem doctrinam tradi oportuit, ut fideles omnibus horis parati essent.'

[1] *Viventes*, et *qui supersunt ad adventum Domini* sunt iidem: et hi pronomine *nos* denotantur. Unaquæque generatio, quæ hoc vel illo tempore vivit, occupat illo vitæ suæ tempore locum eorum, qui tempore adventus Domini victuri sunt.'

[2] Acts 1: 11. [3] Acts 3: 21.

He shall descend '*with a shout.*' Formerly He did 'not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.'[1] But now is the revelation of His power. 'Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge His people.'[2] This 'shout of a King,'[3] such as Balaam heard of old from the top of Pisgah, shall be the herald of His approach, and the signal for the mustering of all His friends. It will also be the battle-shout, as of a man of war, rushing resistless on His foes.[4]

'*With the voice of the archangel.*' Some have referred this also—but, I think, unnecessarily—to Christ Himself as the Lord of angels, whom all their bright ranks obey. We are expressly told that, 'when the Son of man shall come in His glory,' He will bring with Him 'all the holy angels.'[5] And, however little foundation there may be for the Jewish fancy of seven archangels, it is no less agreeable to Scripture than it is to reason, and the analogy of God's providence, to believe that the multitude of the heavenly host is arranged in a hierarchy of various ranks and orders. As we read of the 'devil and *his* angels,' so likewise of 'Michael and *his* angels.'[6] The latter, moreover, seem to be classed under different names of 'principality, and power, and might, and dominion;'[7] while to Michael the Epistle of Jude assigns

[1] Is. 42 : 2. [2] Ps. 50 : 3, 4. [3] Num. 23 : 21.
[4] Rev. 19 : 11–16. [5] Matt. 25 : 31.
[6] Matt. 25 : 41; Rev. 12 : 7. [7] Eph. 1 : 21; compare Col. 1 : 16.

this very title of archangel. It is not so certain, however, that it belongs to him exclusively. Daniel, indeed, speaks of him as 'the great prince;' but then again only as 'one of the chief princes.'[1] And as for the clause before us, it would be better rendered indefinitely, thus: '*with voice of archangel.*'[2]

It is added: '*and with the trump of God*'—*with trumpet*[3] *of God*—'such a one as is used in the service of God in heaven.'[4] This trumpet of the resurrection is in First Corinthians distinguished as 'the last trump;' and there the Apostle no sooner names it, than he repeats the assurance, that 'the trumpet shall sound.'[5] The same startling feature in the proceedings of that day is adverted to no less explicitly by our Lord Himself: 'And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet.'[6] For my part, I do not think we are at liberty to treat these frequent, plain, solemn announcements as mere rhetorical ornamentation, meaning nothing. And scarcely more satisfactory is it to make them symbolical predictions of some mighty influence or other.[7] There is no good reason why we should shrink from understanding them as foretelling a simple, literal fact;—just such a fact as we know occurred at Sinai. There the presence of Jehovah was proclaimed, not only by 'thunders and lightnings, and

[1] Dan. 12: 1; 10: 13.
[2] ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου. [3] ἐν σάλπιγγι. [4] De Wette.
[5] 1 Cor. 15: 52. [6] Matt. 24: 31. Compare Is. 27: 13; Zech. 9: 14.
[7] Olshausen.

a thick cloud upon the mount,' but, more awfully still perhaps, by 'the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.' This unappeasable clangour, in fact, it was that seems to have brought to its climax that display of terrible grandeur. For again we read that, 'when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.'[1] And why, can any one tell us, may not something of the same sort occur again?

Sometimes,[2] I may remark, the archangel's voice and the trumpet of God are considered explanatory of the shout that is first mentioned; and not as separate and additional. Such a construction is no doubt allowable, but it is not the most natural; nor is the sense it yields so impressive, as when we conceive of the Lord Himself, as He rends the heavens and comes down, uttering His own Lion-voice of majesty, and thereby giving the signal, that is then instantaneously caught up and prolonged by voice and trumpet along the whole bright array of the celestial host.

Let us now see what are to be the consequences of a descent thus gloriously heralded.

'*And the dead in Christ shall arise first.*' The last word is the emphatic one:—'*The dead in Christ shall arise first*'—first of all—before anything else is done;—so little danger is there of their being altogether overlooked, as you apprehend.

[1] Ex. 19: 16, 19. [2] As by Lünemann and Alford.

'*The dead in Christ shall arise;*'—and it is to be observed that not a word is said of the resurrection of any others. Even so in the elaborate and minute and lengthened statements of the fifteenth of First Corinthians you will find no mention of the wicked dead: 'Every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming.' For this silence in both places two reasons have been suggested. The first is, that in both places the writer's immediate object did not lead him beyond the question of the resurrection of the saints. And the second is, that it is far from being certain that the wicked do rise at the same time with the righteous; many believing that the latter alone are to be raised at the commencement of the millennial kingdom, and the former at its close. But into the discussion of that point we are not required to go at present. While the passage before us, if read in the light of some other Scriptures,[1] may well suggest the doctrine of a second resurrection, it is a mistake to suppose that it directly teaches it. The priority of the resurrection here spoken of is asserted in relation, not to any subsequent resurrection, but to the event described in the very next verse:—

'*Then*'—after that; not sooner—'*we which are alive* and *remain*'—*we the living, who are being left over*[2]—having ourselves also undergone the wondrous change from mor-

[1] Such as Is. 26: 14, 19; Dan. 12: 2; Luke 14: 14; 20: 35, 36; 1 Cor. 15: 23; Phil. 3: 8–11.

[2] As in v. 15.

tal to immortal, '*shall together with them*'—that again is now the important point;[1] '*together with them*,' not without them, nor by so much as one hour ahead of them, but along with them, in one reunited, loving, inseparable company—'*be caught up*'—or *caught away*;[2] as when 'the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip,' or as when Enoch 'was not, for God took him;' or as when 'Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven;' or rather as when the Lord Himself 'was taken up, and a cloud received Him.'[3] And now, behold, that same shrine of glory returns! He sends, shall I say, His own chariot for His Well-beloved? '*Together with them we shall be caught away in clouds*[4] *to meet the Lord, into*[5] *the air;*'—before, that is, in His descent from heaven, He even reaches the earth.

And what, you may now inquire, what becomes of the Lord and His gathered saints? Do they abide permanently in the air? No; 'it is as He is coming, not abiding,' says Augustine,[6] 'that we shall go to meet Him.' Will the Lord, then, return at once with them to heaven, whence He had just descended? And to that question also, I think, we may give a no less confident negative. There are only three other places in the New Testament, where the phrase here translated '*to meet*'[7] occurs; and in all of them (Matt. 25: 1, 6; Acts 28: 15)

[1] It precedes the verb in the original. [2] *ἁρπαγησόμεθα.*

[3] Acts 8: 39; Gen. 5: 24; 2 Kings 2: 11; Acts 1: 9.

[4] *ἐν νεφέλαις.* [5] *εἰς*—construed with the verb, *caught away.*

[6] 'Venienti quippe ibitur obviam, non manenti.' *De Civ. Dei*, xx. 20. 2. [7] *εἰς ἀπάντησιν.*

the party met continues after the meeting to advance still in the direction in which He was moving previously. Guided by these examples, and agreeably, as I believe, to the general testimony of Scripture on this subject,[1] I should prefer to adopt the illustrations furnished by one of the most eminent of the Fathers: 'If He is to descend, for what purpose shall we be caught away? To honour us. For so, when a king is entering a city, those in honourable station go forth to meet him, but the criminals await their judge within. And when a fond father arrives, the children, worthy of the name, are taken out in a chariot, to see and caress him, but offending domestics remain within.'[2] Or, as still another expresses the same view without a figure: 'We shall be caught away to meet Christ, that all may come with the Lord to battle'[3] — not in heaven surely, but on the earth. Nor, indeed, to my own mind is any thing in the future more certain, than that the glorified Church is to be thus associated with the King of kings

[1] Compare Zech. 14: 4, 5; Matt. 24: 29–31; 25: 31, &c.; 1 Cor. 6: 2; Rev. 19: 11, &c., to the end of the book; besides the numberless prophecies with which these connect themselves.

[2] Chrysostom: *εἰ μέλλει καταβαίνειν, τίνος ἕνεκεν ἁρπαγησόμεθα; τιμῆς ἕνεκεν. καὶ γὰρ βασιλέως εἰς πόλιν εἰσελαύνοντος, οἱ μὲν ἔντιμοι πρὸς ἀπάντησιν ἐξίασιν· οἱ δὲ κατάδικοι ἔνδον μένουσι τὸν κριτήν.* [The same illustration occurs in the *Hom. in Ascens.* Theodoret and Œcumenius retain it here.] *καὶ πατρὸς φιλοστόργου παραγενομένου, οἱ μὲν παῖδες, καὶ ἄξιοι παῖδες εἶναι, ἐπ' ὀχήματος ἐξάγονται, ὥστε ἰδεῖν καὶ καταφιλῆσαι· οἱ δὲ προσκεκρουκότες τῶν οἰκετῶν ἔνδον μένουσιν.*

[3] Ambrosiaster: 'Rapiemur obviam Christo ut cum Domino omnes veniant ad prœlium.'

and Lord of lords in the judgment of the nations, and the government of this world, as well as in the inheritance of all things.

But the one idea, which best fills and satisfies every ambition and aspiration of the renewed nature, in its anticipations of things to come, is that which the Apostle here subjoins: '*and so*'—as the grand result of all these wonders—'*so shall we ever be with the Lord.*' Blessed consummation of the mutual love and self-sacrifice of Christ and His people! Blessed fulfilment of His prayer for them, 'that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me'![1] Blessed reward of their patient waiting, and realization of their largest and fondest hopes! '*We shall be with the Lord*'—not as servants, but as friends—as 'His brethren, and His sisters, and mother'[2]—as the rejoicing Bride with the rejoicing Bridegroom. Thus '*shall we be with the Lord;*' and that not occasionally, or for an age, or a millennium; but continually, and for ever.

Well might Paul say to the troubled and weeping saints at Thessalonica: '*Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.*' Lay them up in your memories and hearts, and, as occasion calls, fail not to use them for your mutual comfort.

Nothing farther, I trust, need be added to convince

[1] John 17: 24. [2] Matt. 12: 50.

you, my hearers, how strong is the consolation they are fitted to impart at all times to the bereaved children of God, or how perfectly adapted to the peculiar exigency that had arisen in the church to which they were first addressed.

I shall, therefore, in conclusion, simply exhort you to meditate often and earnestly these holy and glorious revelations. '*Maran atha!*'[1]—'*The Lord cometh*'!—should be the watchword of all the soldiers of Christ in all their encampments, and from every watch-tower, through all the long and dreary night. Let it, dear brethren, be the strength and the joy of *our* hearts,

> 'Till Thou,
> Our glorious King, Thy standard in the heavens
> Unfurlest, and command'st the Archangel strong
> To make the silver-toned trump of jubilee
> Sound Thine arrival through the vault of heaven,
> And quicken life within the narrow tomb.'[2]

I am well aware, and very sad it is to know, that this exhortation will sound rather strange to most of you. Well, I can but point you to the Scriptural basis on which it rests, and so leave you to judge for yourselves. But remember—alas, that it should be so generally forgotten!—that the prevailing neglect of the doctrine of our Lord's second coming, as something with which we cannot possibly have any very special concern during our lifetime, is not more at variance with the apos-

[1] 1 Cor. 16: 22.
[2] Edward Irving, *Preliminary Discourse* to Ben Ezra.

tolic spirit, as it glowed and triumphed in the apostolic churches, and still breathes in the apostolic writings, than it is a palpable violation of the standards of Westminster, and our own Confession of Faith. 'As Christ would have us'—I quote from the last chapter of that Confession—'to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin, and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity; so will He have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.'

LECTURE XIX.

I. Thess. 5 : 1–5.—'But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day.'

In the first eleven verses of this chapter the writer adverts to the question of the time of our Lord's second coming, and of the great events connected therewith, and urges the duty of continual watchfulness and preparation.

It has been supposed,[1] that Timothy may have brought some inquiry from the Thessalonians in relation to the former topic. But this is not at all necessary to account for Paul's having referred to it. The events themselves were too deeply interesting, to allow of any one who believed in, and longed for, the consummation, being indifferent as to the time of its arrival. And besides, as is presently shown, what was actually revealed on

[1] By Olshausen.

that point very nearly concerned the safety and sanctification of the Church.

'*But of the times and the seasons.*' Of these two words,[1] if they must here be strictly defined and distinguished, the latter is the more specific, denoting fitness or opportunity, and suggesting thoughts of the sovereignty and wisdom, with which God has arranged and adjusted the great providential times or periods. For as with man, so is it also with God: 'To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the sun.'[2] Not until 'the fulness of the time was come,' did 'God send forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law.'[3] And so now He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained.'[4]

'*But concerning*[5] *the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that one write unto you.*'[6] 'They who are watching,' says Bengel, 'do not require to be told when the hour is to be, for they are ready at all times.'[7] The second verse, moreover, courteously takes it for granted, that the Thessalonians already knew what was most important for them to know on this subject. They knew it from Paul's own teaching, and that confirmed, as it no doubt had been, by the voice of prophecy.

[1] *χρόνων—καιρῶν.* [2] Eccl. 3: 1. [3] Gal. 4: 4.
[4] Acts 17: 31. Compare 1 Tim. 6: 15, *καιροῖς ἰδίοις.*
[5] *περί.* [6] *γράφεσθαι, it be written.*
[7] 'Qui vigilant, his non opus est dici, quando futura sit hora, nam semper parati sunt.'

among themselves. Of all these instructions the substance is here again repeated for their greater establishment and consolation.

'*For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*'

There is much significance in the designation so common in Scripture, '*the day of the Lord.*' Now it is man's day[1]—the day of man's ambition—man's pleasures—man's judging—man's glory; and 'God is not in all his thoughts.'[2] How great the change from this to '*the day of the Lord*'! Then 'the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.'[3]

But observe how it is, and when it is, that the transition is effected from what may be called the human era to the Divine. There is, indeed, no determination here of the precise date. 'Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.'[4] Such was our Lord's solemn testimony before His death. And in like manner, after His resurrection, He still repressed an over-curious inquisition into 'the secret things' which belong to God. 'It is not,' said He to the assembled disciples, 'it is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the

[1] See 1 Cor. 4:3 (Greek). [2] Ps. 10:4. [3] Is. 2:11. [4] Mark 13:32.

Father hath put in His own power.'[1] It accords, therefore, with the analogy of Scripture, that in the present instance also we are furnished merely with certain general signs and characteristics of the approach of the consummation, and chiefly as these are connected with the moral tone of human society at the time.

In the first place, you will notice the stealthiness of that approach: '*The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*' It is always thus spoken of in Scripture, as a surprise and sudden catastrophe. It is compared to the breaking forth of the deluge—to the rain of fire on Sodom and Gomorrah—to the unannounced return of a householder to his servants—to a cry at midnight—to the falling of a snare on the unwary bird—to the lightning's flash.[2] But the image most frequently employed is the one before us—the coming of a thief in the night,[3] unheralded, unlooked for, unthought of, 'at the time 'when deep sleep falleth on men.'[4]

This favourite illustration, moreover, like most of the others, represents to us, not merely the secrecy and unexpectedness, but the hostile aspect also of our Lord's future advent to the unbelieving and unprepared. All too plainly it suggests what an unwelcome alarm the event will be to all such. 'The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.'[5]

[1] Deut. 29: 29; Acts 1: 7.
[2] Luke 17: 24–30, 50; 21: 35; Matt. 25: 6.
[3] Matt. 24: 42–44; Mark 13: 34, 35; Luke 12: 39; 2 Pet. 3: 10; Rev. 3: 3; 16: 15. [4] Job. 4: 13. [5] John 10: 10.

Both these conclusions—as to the suddenness and the terribleness of this coming—receive a strong confirmation from what is said in the third verse of the condition and the fate of the ungodly.

Mark their security: '*For when they shall say*'—or, *when they are saying*[1]—'*Peace and safety;*'—prosperity at home, and no danger from abroad—*peace and safety*, not in the love and service of the Lord, nor in the might and glory of His presence, but in separation from Him, in the persuasion that 'the promise of His coming'[2] is a fable, or has been long since forgotten, and in the unrestrained pursuit and enjoyment of the world. Such, my hearers, according to the repeated testimony of Scripture—even such, alas, will be the spirit of Christendom itself on the very eve of her Lord's return; a spirit of fleshly vanity, of intense secularity, and lawless violence, such as rioted in the days before the flood, and before the descent of the fiery vengeance on the cities of the plain. Nor will it at all relieve the horror of the last dread counterpart to those evil times, that the excesses and pollutions of the period referred to may yet seek to disguise themselves beneath some flimsy 'form of godliness.'[3] Faith having well nigh disappeared from the earth,[4] and 'the love of most[5] having waxed cold,' there will still remain many traces and memorials of the wonders wrought by these heavenly principles in the

[1] ὅταν λέγωσιν. The γάρ is now commonly omitted. [2] 2 Pet. 3: 4.
[3] 2 Tim. 3: 5. [4] Luke 18: 8. [5] Matt. 24: 12, τῶν πολλῶν.

past ages, and along with them, as we can well conceive, some ghastly mimicry of the principles themselves. And all the while, in the vain presumption of the carnal mind, and in bold defiance of every Divine warning, men will be saying in their own hearts, and one to another, in all places of social intercourse and public resort: '*Peace and safety!* Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. We shall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our hearts, to add drunkenness to thirst.'[1]

It may be remarked here, that the whole of this description might seem to be at variance with our Lord's great prophecy regarding the same general topic. As that discourse is recorded in the 21st chapter of Luke's Gospel, the appearance of the Son of man is to be immediately preceded by 'signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.' The difficulty, however, may be obviated by considering these commotions as the first breaking up of the previous portentous calm; — as the first labour-pangs; — the morning agitation, so to speak, of the mists of darkness, just before the sunrising. Nay, in the midst even of all

[1] 2 Pet. 3: 4; Is. 56: 12; Deut. 29: 19.

these mustering omens of wrath, the wicked in their infatuation may vainly strive with the old word of cheer, '*Peace and safety*,' to hush their own startled fears.

And now, brethren, behold the issue of all this confident, Godless boasting! '*Then*'—at the very moment of the utterance of the impious self-congratulation; *then*—'*sudden destruction cometh upon them.*' Long and often had they been forewarned of it, the merciful God, 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,'[1] still sparing them, and still delaying His strange work of judgment. And still the only use, to which they put 'the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and longsuffering,' was to 'treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.'[2]

Thus it has ever been. 'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil;'[3] until the pent-up vengeance, now deeper and fiercer for the long restraint, bursts forth 'suddenly at an instant.'[4] And then the mystery of Providence is solved, and the righteous cry: 'Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.'[5] Thus too shall it be in earth's last and sorest trial. The

[1] 2 Pet. 3: 9. [2] Rom. 2: 4, 5. [3] Eccl. 8: 11.
[4] Is. 30: 13. [5] Ps. 73: 18, 19.

plagues of the apocalyptic Babylon shall 'come in one day.'[1] To complete the figure of the second verse, it shall be as when the goodman of the house has shut to the doors, and fastened every bolt, and, happy in his security, betakes himself to sleep, and dreams of children and friends, of peace and plenty, and 'much goods laid up for many years.'[2] In a moment the fair vision vanishes, and he wakes only in time to feel the steel of the assassin in his heart.

By means of another comparison, and one which is also very frequently employed in Scripture—'*even as travail upon her that is with child*'[3]—the Apostle would confirm all that he has just asserted respecting the uncertainty and suddenness, the sharpness and violence, of the catastrophe, but with the additional suggestion of its inevitableness. And so he immediately adds: '*and they shall not escape*'—*they shall in no wise*[4] *escape.*

In contrast with this doleful picture of the state and prospects of the ungodly, we are next called to note the privileges, preparation, and duty, of the true servants of Christ; vs. 4–11.

'*But ye, brethren, are not in darkness*'—the darkness of nature—the darkness of sin and ignorance; of ignorance especially in regard to this subject of the coming of the day of the Lord. You know the truth of it—the nearness and mighty import of it; and surely, then,

[1] Rev. 18: 8. [2] Luke 12: 19.
[3] ὥσπερ . . . τῇ ἐχούσῃ. [4] οὐ μή.

there can be little danger '*that that day*'—or simply, *the day*;[1] whether as referring to the day already mentioned, or as denoting generally the time of light and joy, in opposition to the darkness of the present state; *that the day*—'*should overtake you as a thief*.' To you, at least, it will be no surprise, but only what you have been looking for. And as to you it brings no danger, so neither can it occasion any alarm. On the contrary, it is on all accounts most desirable, as the season of your enlargement and triumph. Terrible as it will be to the impenitent, you have been brought into the most peaceful, gracious relation to it. '*For ye are all*'[2]—(such is the reading now on good grounds preferred)—*for all ye;* all of you by profession; all of you in the judgment of Christian charity—'*are sons of light, and sons of day*.'[3] Ye are the children of God, and 'God is light.' 'Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.' In the hour of your regeneration, God 'called you out of darkness into His marvellous light;' and, not only did you 'in His light see light,'—light on your present duties and future prospects,—but the light was your life, first quickening, and then guiding and comforting, while itself 'shining more and more unto the perfect day.'[4] For what is that coming day, but the full effulgence of the dawn wherein ye now rejoice?

The duties resulting from this state of privilege and

[1] ἡ ἡμέρα. [2] πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς. [3] υἱοὶ φωτός . . . υἱοὶ ἡμέρας.
[4] 1 John 1 : 5; Eph. 5 : 8; 1 Pet. 2 : 9; Ps. 36 : 9; Prov. 4 : 18.

hope, into which the Church has been introduced, will fall to be considered in our next Lecture.

At present, you may from what has been said learn,

1. In the first place, that a spirit of habitual indifference and unconcern as to the coming of the day of the Lord is very far from being a proof of Christian wisdom. The topic, it is evident, was full of interest in the apostolic age. And it is not easy to see how the grounds of that interest can have been impaired by the lapse of eighteen centuries. Most true it is, however, that scarcely any other topic in the whole range of Biblical inquiry is so distasteful to some of the present leaders of the religious world.

2. Secondly, if the approach of this day is fitly compared to that of a thief in the night, stealing upon us we know not when, 'at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning,'[1] does not this at least exclude any certain knowledge on our part of the intervention of a thousand years of gospel triumph before its arrival?

3. In the third place, you may well be on your guard against the fascination of the siren lullaby—'*Peace and safety!*'—with which in our day so many of Christ's ministers unite with the prophets of infidelity in beguiling and stupefying the souls of men. We are all of us old enough to remember more than one occasion,

[1] Mark 13: 35.

when that pleasant strain swelled out into a world's anthem, in which both sides of the Atlantic bore their emulous parts. As when the present Pope ascended the throne, and seemed disposed to lead the way in the march of social and political reform; what a pledge of progress was that! what a discouragement and rebuke to the old Protestant fanaticism! Or rather, how did the Protestant and Evangelical champions themselves summon before them the delighted multitudes, to hear them declaim on this newest wonder of the wonderful nineteenth century! The chorus rose, indeed, very high, and it was also of very short duration. Then came the era of Crystal Palaces, and universal, international fraternity and coöperation. Now at last wars were to cease to the ends of the earth. Swords were to be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks,[1] excepting such few specimens as it might be interesting to future happy generations to have preserved in antiquarian museums, as memorials of the crimes and follies of the past. Thus again we 'rejoiced in our boastings.'[2] The Crimean uproar came in, no doubt, as a somewhat too harsh discord in the general harmony. But it was soon over; and once more we took to tuning our instruments, with Atlantic cables for our strings. Ah, dear friends, and what sight is that which at this moment[3] arrests every hand, and draws all eyes towards itself? Behold, across the billowy main, all Europe—baptized Europe—itself heaving and

[1] Ps. 46: 9; Is. 2: 4. [2] James 4: 16. [3] March 27, 1859.

smoking as one volcano! Yet even so, you will find very many, and among them not a few Christian teachers, who, in the presence of such a spectacle, can still take comfort in some poor theory or fancy of theirs, about the fragments of these exploded thrones coming gently down again in the shape of peaceful, well-ordered republican commonwealths. Who dares so much as to hint that the lurid horror, which now glares upon the nations, may possibly be 'but the beginning of sorrows'[1] —'the sign of wrath awak'd'[2]—the striking of 'the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth'[3]—the immediate precursor of the Son of man? And yet, my hearers, for aught that any man knows, this, and nothing else, may be its true character. We have learned at any rate, that the prevalence of a spirit of levity, worldliness, and a profane security, is no evidence whatever to the contrary, but the reverse.

Let us, then, in all our speculations and discourses on human affairs and national prospects, seek to save ourselves from that fearful rebuke of God: 'Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto

[1] Matt. 24: 8. [2] Milton, *Par. Lost*, vi. 58, 59. [3] Rev. 3: 10.

you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? Therefore thus saith the Lord God; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it; to wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord God.'[1]

4. And need I, in conclusion, remind you, my hearers, that what is true of a Christless Christendom is no less true of a Christless soul? How many of you, may it not be feared, are daily singing this same song, 'Peace and safety!—pleasant homes—prosperous business—larger barns—growing reputation—thickening honours—Soul, take thine ease![2] Peace, peace!' But is it so? 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.'[3] And what, in the sight of God, is *your* character at this moment? Wholly given up, in the bent of your affections and desires, and in every effort and

[1] Ezek. 13: 10, 16. [2] Luke 12: 19. [3] Is. 57: 21.

pursuit of life, to the service of the idols of the natural man—'the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.'[1] For many years you have wandered round about, and all over, Calvary; but you have there seen no sight—heard no sound—that could bow you down in humiliation, and confession, and tears of penitence and joy. Often have you gazed, perhaps with something of a curious interest, into the 'fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness;'[2] but you have never once washed therein. Again, and again, and again, you have looked toward mercy's open door; but you have never entered. You may have even loved—you may still love—to hear of the Saviour; but you know that you have not come to Him. You do not profess to be reconciled to God. You are yet in your sins. Then surely, dear friends, there can at least be no 'safety' in a 'peace' which any sickness or accident, to say nothing of the coming of the day of the Lord, may at any time dissolve for ever into the restlessness and storms of an undone eternity. And how shall you then escape? In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I call upon you individually once more to burst the spell of this fatal lethargy. Go not up into your bed this night—give not sleep to your eyes, or slumber to your eyelids—till you have prostrated yourself at His blessed feet, saying, 'Lord, save me; I perish.'[3] There lie—let Him not go—till His own hand lift thee up, and He shall breathe upon thee, and say: 'Peace—my peace—be unto thee!'

[1] 1 John 2: 16. [2] Zech. 13: 1. [3] Matt. 8: 25.

LECTURE XX.

I. THESS. 5 : 5–11.—'We are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

THE first half of the fifth verse belongs to the preceding context, the second rather to what follows, being a resumption of the figure, which had just been employed for the illustration of the Christian privilege of the Thessalonians, and which is now again made use of, both negatively and positively, for the enforcement of the duty incumbent on all who share in the same high and holy distinction.

'*We are not of night*,[1] *nor of darkness;*' that is, either, according to the construction of the previous clause, *we are not* sons *of night, nor of darkness;* or simply, *we do not belong to night or darkness;* that is not the element in which we live, nor the sphere of our activity. '*Therefore*,' adds the Apostle, or *so then*[2]—a

[1] Without the article. [2] ἄρα οὖν.

favourite phrase of his, indicating a prompt and inevitable inference; *so then*—'*let us not sleep as* do *others*'—*even as the others*,[1] whose affinities and supposed interests lie in that dismal region.

Observe, then, that *the others do sleep*. This is the common condition of all worldly men. However wide awake they fancy themselves to be, however knowing and sagacious, they are really, as to all highest things—things of the soul, of eternity, of God—in a state of slumber; of habitual, deep, lethargic sleep. They have forgotten whence they are-fallen—whatever is most interesting in the history of the race—the origin and destination of man, as made in the Divine image and for the Divine glory. They are alike insensible to the obligation of present duty, and secure as to the approach of danger. Meanwhile they are possessed with the strangest misconceptions of the true nature, and relations, and comparative value of things; and the fantastic absurdity of their notions and estimates they can neither detect nor correct. With what difficulty also are they aroused to any perception of the real state of the case! How prone are they to quarrel with their disturbers, even with heaven's own holy light! And when the startling call passes, or the hand of a severe providence is removed, how readily do they sink down again into 'yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep!'[2] And all this, while eternal judgment is hasting on, and the Judge

[1] ὡς καὶ οἱ λοιποί. See ch. 4: 13. [2] Prov. 6: 10.

Himself may be even at the door. Such is the perilous position, and such are the fatal tendencies, of the natural man.[1]

To this spiritual lethargy it is, that Paul here opposes a gracious vigilance and sobriety, as what ought to characterize the children of the light and of the day. '*But let us watch*'—because of the solemn prospects before us, and as 'knowing perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.' '*Let us watch*'; because on every side there are many dangers, many snares, many watchful foes. And hence the frequency and urgency with which this duty of an unremitting vigilance is pressed upon the Church by our Lord and His Apostles. 'What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.'[2] And it is still the same voice, which through the thick mists of spiritual delusion, that overspread the earth under the sixth vial, again whispers in the wakeful ear of faith: 'Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth.'[3]

'*And be sober.*' Let us abstain from the exciting, stupefying cup of worldly indulgence; and see that we pervert not even the lawful use of things seen and temporal to an unlawful and injurious abuse. Let us be moderate, temperate, restrained, in all the plans and pursuits, the triumphs and sorrows, of the present fleet-

[1] See John Howe's Sermon on this text.
[2] Mark 13: 37. [3] Rev. 16: 15.

ing life. Let us be sober, that we may watch. Let us watch—watch and pray—watch unto prayer, that we may be enabled to maintain this excellent spirit of Christian calmness and sobriety. 'Be sober, be vigilant.'[1]

And it is farther to be noted, that, as these two duties are thus frequently mentioned together as having a strong mutual sympathy, so are they likewise commonly introduced, as here, in immediate reference to the coming of the Lord.[2] Now the idea of most undoubtedly is, that these and other Christian graces can be more effectually promoted by substituting for the day of Christ's coming the day of the disciple's death, as a more direct and influential object of religious expectation. It is quite enough to say that He, who best knows the heart of man, and whose will is our sanctification, thinks otherwise. Else why is it that in the New Testament the former is continually, and the latter almost never, referred to, as a motive to all holy living? Surely this one fact may be regarded as decisive of the question, even though we were utterly unable to assign any reason for the fact itself.

But it well deserves to be considered, in the first place, that, as regards the question of precise dates, we are really as much in the dark in the one case as in the other, no man living, as I believe, being able to prove from

[1] 1 Pet. 5 : 8.

[2] Compare Matt. 24 : 42, &c.; Luke 21 : 34–36; Rom. 13 : 11–13; Phil. 4 : 5; Tit. 2 : 11–13; 1 Pet. 1 : 13.

Scripture, that he shall 'see death'[1] before the Lord returns. So that, even in the mere element of uncertainty as to the time of occurrence, the one is no less adapted than the other to quicken and maintain a spirit of watchfulness.

And then in every other respect the difference between the two, great as it is, is wholly to the advantage of what may be called the New Testament motive. In itself death is no joyful event even to the Christian. It is a humbling memorial of our sin and ruin. It is separation from family and friends—the sudden and utter quenching of all present social interests—mysterious darkness and silence and loneliness—yea, the destruction of our very constitution as human beings.

Far otherwise is it with the coming of the day of the Lord. To that we can look forward, not as a sad necessity, but as a 'blessed hope'[2]—as a time, not of cheerless isolation, but of glad reunion of all the sons of God—lifting at last our perfected nature, now for ever redeemed from its defilement and weakness and dishonour, into a participation of the Divine rest, and of the joy of the Lord. For a morning so bright and glorious, as that of the resurrection, what child of light and of day, however wearied and faint in his mind, would not willingly watch?

The seventh verse confirms the argument for watchfulness and sobriety by analogies drawn from the sphere

[1] Heb. 11 : 5. [2] Tit. 2 : 13.

of natural life. '*For they that sleep, sleep by night.*'[1] The season of darkness is also, and indeed for that very reason, the season of slumber. And so, while spiritual night draws its curtains round the soul, what else is to be expected from it but that it sleep—sleep through all life's agitations, beneath the thunders of Sinai, and the pleadings of mercy from the cross?

'*And they that are drunken, are drunk by night*'[2]—as being likewise the favourite time for indulgence in the grosser immoralities. The decency of heathenism itself shrank from a man intoxicated in the daylight. To this general sense of decorum Peter alluded, when vindicating the wonder of Pentecost from a blasphemous interpretation. 'These are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.' And in his Second Epistle the same Apostle mentions it, as one of the most frightful features of a great future apostasy there described, that men shall 'count it pleasure to riot in the daytime.'[3] For ordinarily, and wherever the sense of shame has not been quite extinguished, 'they that are drunken, are drunk by night.' Drunkenness and darkness are congenial.

And just so it is with unregenerate man at his best estate. He is intoxicated with the things of this present world, and that because not only of the wickedness, but of 'the ignorance that is in him.'[4] He knows

[1] *νυκτός.*

[2] *μεθυσκόμενοι νυκτὸς μεθύουσιν.* The difference, however, seems to be merely one of form.

[3] Acts 2: 15; 2 Pet. 2: 13. [4] Eph. 4: 18.

nothing better;—nothing better than to 'eat, drink, and be merry,'[1]—'to lay up for himself treasures upon earth'[2]—scale the heights of earthly authority, fame, and influence—explore all realms of science and taste—and thus in one way or another gratify the faculties and propensities of an unsanctified nature. Whatever semblance or energy of life, accordingly, is visible throughout this vast dormitory of souls, is manifested only in the pursuit or enjoyment of what Scripture calls 'earthly things,' and 'unfruitful works of darkness.'[3] With these things, it is here implied, 'the man of the world, who has his portion in this life,'[4] is drunken; and this because it is still night with him. He knows not God, nor the things of God. How, then, can he love them, or busy himself about them? Temporal good, on the contrary, being all that he has any experience or practical sense of, it is not strange or unnatural that he should plunge into it, or strain after it, any more than we need wonder at the insane clamours of the sons of Belial, when 'flown with insolence and wine,'[5] they wander forth into our darkened streets.

But how unnatural were all this in the case of a soul to which Christ has given light—'in whose heart God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'![6] And there-

[1] Luke 12 : 19. [2] Matt. 6 : 19.
[3] Phil. 3 : 19; Eph. 5 : 11. [4] Ps. 17 : 14.
[5] Milton. [6] Eph. 5 : 14; 2 Cor. 4 : 6.

fore in the eighth verse the Apostle first reiterates his earnest injunction: '*But let us, who are of the day, be sober;*'—or, more literally, *But we being of day*, because we are of day, and belong to the region of light—the spiritual Goshen—the element of a free, pure, rational, joyous activity—*but we being of day, let us be sober.*[1] Looking out from thence, we behold 'the darkness covering the earth, and gross darkness the people'[2]—souls immersed in shadows, and slumbering there, struck with spiritual paralysis, or staggering about in their sleep, drugged and drunken with the pleasures of sin; while on every hand are seen also through the gloom the mighty spirits, that 'rule the darkness of this world,'[3] passing busily to and fro, silently wreathing the chains of hell in ever multiplying, ever tightening coils around their unconscious but willing thralls.

Nor are we Christians secure from their assaults. As we too once wore the same chains, so the fragments of them cling to us still. For our partial escape from his dreadful tyranny, Satan owes us a bitter grudge. And that is another reason why we, being of day, should be sober—sober in our estimate of our own strength, as well as of those things we once prized so highly.

The Apostle now goes on to illustrate, though under a different figure, the dependence of this spirit of sobriety—moderation—temperance in all things—on

[1] ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡμέρας ὄντες, νήφωμεν. [2] Is. 60: 2. [3] Eph. 6: 12.

the habitual contemplation of the truths, objects and glories of that higher sphere of life and light, into which we have been introduced. '*Let us be sober, putting*'—or, *having put*—'*on*[1] *the breastplate of faith and love, and, for helmet, the hope of salvation.*'

Christian sobriety, you perceive, has no affinity whatever with torpor or inactivity. It is the sobriety of a sentinel at his post—of a soldier on the battlefield. For the Christian too is a soldier, and 'as a good soldier' must 'endure hardness,'[2] and is exposed to continual surprises and assaults. He 'goeth not a warfare,' however, 'at his own charges,'[3] nor in his own strength. The Captain of salvation furnishes him with armour of proof—the very same that He Himself was arrayed in when He went forth to conflict (Is. 59 : 17) —a Divine panoply, against which no weapon of earth or hell shall prosper. Of what this consists the Apostle gives us a fuller statement in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians. Here he mentions only the main pieces of the defensive armour—the breastplate and the helmet—those needed for the protection of the vital parts, the heart and the head. The breastplate is faith and love ; the helmet is the hope of salvation. And it would not be difficult to show, that, while this enumeration is less detailed than that in Ephesians, and the expression also somewhat

[1] ἐνδυσάμενοι. The Christian's sobriety is the result, not the cause, of his gracious endowment.

[2] 2 Tim. 2 : 3. [3] 1 Cor. 9 : 7.

variant, the one description is really equivalent to the other.

Thus the breastplate, or cuirass, or coat of mail, that covers the entire person, behind as well as before, from the neck to the middle, is there said to be righteousness; here, faith and love. But then the righteousness intended is no other than that in which Paul so often glories as the righteousness of faith—the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself made ours through faith. That righteousness, dear friends, and none other, is our sure and impregnable breastplate. As 'the coat' the Saviour wore 'was without seam, woven from the top throughout,'[1] so in this Divine harness, with which His followers are clad, is neither joint nor flaw, through which Satan's fiery darts or the lightnings of the law shall ever find an entrance. And again I remind you, that this 'righteousness of God is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.'[2] With perfect propriety, therefore, may this appropriating faith itself be called our breastplate; just as in Ephesians it is our shield, always ready and at hand for every time of need; as being that power of the renewed nature, whereby it discerns a present Saviour, and lays hold of His strength, and shelters itself behind Him.

In like manner, the whole aggressive power of the Christian, no less than his personal security, depends on his faith. If his one weapon of offense be 'the

[1] John 19: 23. [2] Rom. 3: 22.

sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,'[1] it is also true that faith is the arm by which that sword is wielded. And hence says John: 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'[2] Indeed, the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, you remember, is throughout a glowing recital of faith's mighty acts, both of doing and suffering.

But you will now observe, that with faith *love* is here joined to form the breastplate. As if he had said: You of course understand that an unloving faith—a bare, cold assent to doctrinal formulas, however numerous and excellent—would be no protection for us whatever. 'Faith without works is dead,'[3] and love is faith's vital breath and working power.[4] Such is the spiritual completeness of the new man in Christ Jesus, and such the living connection and inter-dependence of the Christian graces.

This remark we have had more than one occasion to make in the course of our exposition; and it receives still another illustration from the last clause of the verse before us, where, along with faith and love, *hope* also, the last of the heavenly sisters, fails not to reappear, and add her bright ministry to theirs, in dressing the Christian hero for the field.

The helmet was at once for ornament and defense—rendering the warrior conspicuous from afar, and at the same time giving him a great increase of safety and

[1] Eph. 6 : 17. [2] John 5 : 4. Gal. 5 : 6. [3] James 2 : 26.

confidence in the thickest of the fight. Now, in Ephesians the Christian's helmet is said to be *salvation;* here, *the hope of salvation:* '*and, for helmet, the hope of salvation.*' But neither in this case is there any essential difference of meaning. When the soldier of Christ is directed to take salvation for his helmet, the reference is more direct to his present consciousness of the fact, that through grace he is already a saved man; whereas hope is just that same consciousness looking forward to the future consummation.

And, dear brethren, what a helmet is this! covering the believer as with a glory, and imparting to him a calm assurance in the midst of all trials and perils. As he takes it up from the armory of God, he says with David: 'And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me.'[1] How did it gleam on the head of Stephen, as he sank beneath the blows of his murderers! And of Paul himself, awaiting in imperial Rome the hour of his martyrdom! 'I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.'[2]

Alas for those of you, my hearers, who in this dire conflict of life and death have neither breastplate nor helmet of celestial temper, but are daily rushing for-

[1] Ps. 27: 6. [2] 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.

ward into eternity, naked and open, not only to every grief of time, and to the malice of Satan, but to the terrors also of that judgment, which shall avenge God's violated law, and a Saviour's slighted blood.

LECTURE XXI.

I. Thess. 5 : 9–11.—'For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.'

The mention in the eighth verse of 'the hope of salvation' as the Christian's 'helmet' now leads the writer to confirm and illustrate that hope by a statement of the source, the method, and the nature of the salvation itself.

I. First, the *source* of it. That is here, and everywhere else in Scripture, found only in the sovereign purpose and acting of God: '*For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to the obtaining of salvation.*'[1]

This Divine appointment might possibly be referred immediately to the constitution of the Church, as if it had been said: God *placed*, *set* us where we are with no hostile, but with a gracious, design toward us. The word is the same that is employed by our Lord in His address to the Apostles: 'I have chosen you, and *ordained* you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit'[2]—

[1] ἔθετο . . . εἰς περιποίησιν. [2] John 15 : 16 (ἔθηκα).

which may simply mean: For this end I have chosen you, and *put* you into your present position. And so, when Paul says of the elders of Ephesus, that 'the Holy Ghost had *made* them overseers'[1] of the flock; and of himself, that Christ Jesus had 'counted him faithful, *putting* him into the ministry;'[2] in both cases the form of the expression is still more exactly parallel.

But this reference, even if allowed, to what had transpired in the history of believers, by no means excludes a prior determination on the part of God, of which that very history is itself rather the development and manifestation. The 'calling' is ever 'according to the purpose.' 'Whom God predestinates, them He also calls.'[3] And the only really satisfactory interpretation of the verse is that, which treats it as looking directly back to the counsel of eternity. God does not set men in the Church, and there leave them to work out their salvation by their own skill. This truly had been a miserable ground of hope—a frail, worthless helmet—for any saint that ever lived on earth. No; 'whom God calls, them He also justifies; and whom He justifies, them He also glorifies.'[4] Each several link from the first to the last is in His hand, and that alone renders the chain an indissoluble one, though reaching from everlasting to everlasting. At whatever point, therefore, faith lays *her* hand on that chain, she finds it strong enough to bear all that she can hang on it—even the 'far more

[1] Acts 20 : 28 (ἔθετο).
[2] 1 Tim. 1 : 12 (θέμενος).
[3] Rom. 8 : 28, 30.
[4] Rom. 8 : 30.

exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'[1] In other words, the ultimate security of the believer is, not in himself, but in God—in God's manifold wisdom—in the exceeding greatness of His power—in the unsearchable riches of His grace—that unchangeable love, which, loving from the beginning, loves unto the end. When the redeemed shall stand sinless and triumphant before the throne, their song will be none other than that which they sang here in the valley of humiliation: 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake.'[2]

The conclusion, then, is, that nothing less is here intended than what we formerly found to be implied in the fourth verse of the first chapter, where the Apostle speaks of the election of the Thessalonians. Looking down, from where He sits enthroned far above all height and before all time, on the world of transgressors, God, in the exercise of His own absolute and unimpeachable sovereignty, '*did not appoint us*'—us Christians—as many of us as are what we profess to be—(this limitation, as usual, is silently assumed)—'*did not appoint us to wrath*'—the wrath that is coming on the workers of iniquity, and which equally with others we had deserved—'*but to the obtaining*'—the acquisition and enjoyment—'*of salvation*'—that free, full, perfect salvation from sin and death, of which we, no less than others, stood in need.

[1] 2 Cor. 4: 17. [2] Ps. 115: 1.

II. Observe now, my hearers, in the second place, the *method* of this salvation—or the way in which God's gracious appointment works out its own accomplishment: '*by*,' or *through*,[1] '*our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us.*'

It is, of course, the merest calumny of a wilful ignorance, to represent the Bible as teaching that God rejects—reprobates—destroys any man by an arbitrary act of tyrannical severity, irrespective of the man's character, or without the strictest regard even to the degree of his demerit. But, my hearers, it is an ignorance surely no less wilful, that can now tempt any sinful man to insist on dealing with God on the footing of a direct, independent, legal intercourse. That old way of communication is forever insurmountably blocked up; and there must be opened for us through the mountains some 'new way' by One that is higher than we.[2] When the Church, accordingly, was appointed to obtain salvation, behold, the covenant of peace was 'ordained in the hand of a Mediator.'[3] As the matter is sublimely expressed in the Epistle to the Ephesians (1 : 4), she was 'chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.'

Could we, indeed, conceive of man falling into misery without his fault, God would doubtless have interposed for his deliverance without a Mediator. But man sinned, and death passed upon him only as a sinner.

[1] *διά.* [2] Heb. 10 : 20; Ps. 61 : 2. [3] Gal. 3 : 19.

Now there are many questions that may be started regarding the possibility of mediation in such circumstances, and under the Divine administration—questions resolvable only by direct revelation of the fact, that there *is* a Mediator. But in the light of that revelation we can now much better understand, why such a mode of recovery was both becoming and necessary. If it was nothing more than just for God to affix the penalty of death to sin, and if any thing short of that would have failed to answer the ends of good government—assumptions, which are but immediate inferences from the nature of God as at once holy and benignant—then, as there was no room in this case for the interposition of executive mercy to correct judicial mistakes, or temper an undue severity, it follows at once that justice—the highest justice—Divine justice, not only allowed, but required, the infliction of that very penalty. Can it be doubted that the ends of good government would have been still more fatally endangered, had the connection between sin and its wages, death,[1] been summarily dissolved—if the flames of that sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life, had been suddenly quenched—and the fiery cherubim sent down into the wilderness to bring back the banished wanderers—and all this, without some sufficient, intelligible, public reason of state, why the sinner should thus be treated as righteous?

Now, this reason of state, as I venture to call it, was

[1] Rom. 6: 23.

furnished by the mediation of Christ; and the bare fact, that the Son of God Himself stood in the breach, when to do so involved His own humiliation unto death, may well be thought to demonstrate that no other possible expedient could have furnished it. God would willingly have 'spared His own Son.'[1] But there was no other name than His known in heaven, 'mighty to save.'[2] And therefore the Father gave Him up, and we are permitted to glory in Him as '*our Lord Jesus Christ*'—our Divine, and Divinely appointed and qualified, Saviour.

You perceive, brethren, what an additional assurance is given to the hope of the believer by the personal dignity, and official endowment, of Him who has undertaken our cause. If God has thus wondrously provided for the fulfilment of His own gracious appointment—if He has laid our help on 'the man that is His fellow'—if 'all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen,' 'all power being given unto Him in heaven and in earth' for their accomplishment, and all judgment committed unto the Son[3]—then surely we need not, we must not, we dare not, doubt His ability 'to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.'[4]

But even this is not all. There is yet other, and tenderer, yea, overwhelming confirmation in the very next clause, where of this glorious Person, whom God

[1] Rom. 8: 32. [2] Is. 63: 1.
[3] Zech. 13: 7; 2 Cor. 1: 20; Math. 28: 18; John 5: 22.
[4] Heb. 7: 25.

raised up for our deliverance, it is declared that, in the execution of His mediatorial commission, He '*died for us.*'

For the intervention even of such a Mediator did not, as we have seen, supersede the necessity of a bloody atonement. 'Without shedding of blood is no remission.' Only by 'being made a curse for us,' and dying the death of the curse, was it possible for Christ Himself to 'redeem us from the curse of the law.'[1] Says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things'—that is, it was something due to the honour of God; must it not, then, have been indispensable?—'in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.'[2] The very passage before us plainly enough implies, that the Divine appointment of the Church to salvation at once assumes for certain the death of her Saviour. The sinner must die, or the sinner's Friend.

Now from this only alternative '*our Lord Jesus Christ*' shrank not. He met, and fulfilled, the condition. He '*died for us*'—such was His zeal for the execution of His Father's will, and such His own love for us—a painful, shameful, vicarious, voluntary death. Only in the act itself of dying, as conscious alike of its necessity and its sufficiency, 'He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.'[3] Blessed be God, that hour of the Redeemer's deepest

[1] Heb. 9: 22; Gal. 3: 13. [2] Heb. 2: 10. [3] John 19: 30.

humiliation was also the beginning of an eternal triumph. The familiar experience of His followers was first of all their Leader's own: 'Out of weakness He was made strong.'[1] The great, continuous, irrepressible march to glory, both for Him and for them, started from the cross. And the memory of that cross it still is, that impels evermore the whole onward movement of the sacramental host of God's elect along the line of their generations, giving ever fresh strength to 'faith,' fresh ardour to 'love,' fresh confidence and animation to 'the hope of salvation.' In every extremity—at every new challenge of the enemy—on each successive field of effort and peril, this is their password and battle-cry: 'It is Christ that died.'[2]

III. I have thus spoken of the gospel salvation as originating in the appointment of God, and as accomplished through the mediation and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. It remains for us to advert, in the last place, to the *nature* of that salvation, the mere hope of which is now the helmet of the Christian. In what does it consist? And the answer is: In life with Christ. '*Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep*'—*whether*, when the Lord comes, *we are watching*[3] on faith's high tower, *or sleeping* in the dust of death—'*we should live together with Him.*'

This, then, was the thought that filled the heart of the dying Saviour;—this 'the joy that was set before

[1] Heb. 11 : 34. [2] Rom. 8 : 34. [3] γρηγορῶμεν.

Him,' and for the sake of which He 'endured the cross, despising the shame;'[1]—life out of death, and our participation with Him therein.

That life, in its essential principles and first actings, the Church already enjoys. Already, 'quickened together with Christ'—'risen with Christ'[2]—she 'is passed from death into life,'[3] and 'walks in newness of life.'[4] But in how many respects is it still a 'life hid with Christ in God'![5] As the subject is here regarded, we are to think rather of this same life in its future consummation, when it shall have attained to 'the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ'[6]—not, therefore, as it is now in possession, but as it is the object of hope, when the power of Christ's resurrection shall have pervaded our entire nature, and subdued and fashioned to the likeness of His glory even the vile bodies of the redeemed.[7] Then, brethren, shall be life's spring-tide, and nevermore shall it suffer even momentary ebb, but through endless ages shall swell still higher and brighter, in near and unobstructed communication with its Infinite Source. It is life, not only through Christ, and from Christ, but 'together with' Christ: '*that we should live together with Him.*'[8]

[1] Heb. 12: 2. [2] Eph. 2: 5; Col. 3: 1. [3] 1 John 3: 14 (εἰς).
[4] Rom. 6: 4. [5] Col. 3: 3. [6] Eph. 4: 13. [7] Phil. 3: 21.
[8] The ἅμα (*together*) is explained as belonging, not to σὺν αὐτῷ (*with Him*), but to ζήσωμεν (*live*), in the sense of *we all together* (compare Rom. 3: 12)—thus again, as in ch. 4: 17, excluding the idea of precedence, or advantage of the one class over the other—by Storr, Rosenmüller, Flatt, Schott, De Wette, Barnes, Lünemann, Koch,

Oh the blessedness—far transcending all that hath yet 'entered into the heart of man'[1]—of this intimate, unclouded, face-to-face communion with the Lord! every pulse of our hearts for ever beating responsive to the heart of Jesus! You do not require to be assured—you especially, who have this day been 'leaning,' like John, 'on Jesus' bosom'[2]— that this will indeed be the fulness of joy. It will be a life of victory over death—of freedom from sin and from temptation —of rest from trouble—of loving association with all that is good and great in the universe—of unwearied, happy service—of holy, beneficent, unlimited rule,— the Church 'sitting with Christ in His throne'![3] Need I add that it will be a life also of praise?—praise to God, who from eternity '*appointed us not to wrath, but to the obtaining of*' so great '*salvation*'; and praise to Him, through whose humiliation and self-sacrifice the appointment has thus gone into effect.

It will be further interesting for you to observe, how, at the very close of this long section of the Epistle, regarding the relations of Christians, the living and the dead, to the Lord's coming and kingdom, the writer tenderly reverts to the occasion of the whole discussion.

Alford. The other connection, however, is quite possible as one of Paul's strong expressions of his favourite truth, the intimate communion of the Church with her Lord. The equal interest of the living and the departed, in the glorious result, would still be sufficiently indicated by the previous clause.

[1] 1 Cor. 2 : 9. [2] John 13 : 23. [3] Rev. 3 : 21.

That occasion, you recollect, was the fear of the Thessalonians lest their deceased friends and brethren in Christ might to some extent have forfeited their share of the glories and raptures of that day. No, no, repeats the Apostle; Christ '*died for us, that, whether*,' at the moment of His appearing, '*we wake or sleep*'—*whether we are* then *watching* for Him, as will surely be the spirit and posture of all His true disciples at that time on earth, *or sleeping* in the chambers of the grave—'*we*'—all of us; the one class no less surely, no less early, than the other class—'*should live together with Him.*' As if he had said: The 'great salvation' is likewise 'the common salvation.'[1] In this respect the passage is beautifully parallel to those words in 2 Cor. 5 : 9, 10: 'Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent'—present in the body, or absent from it, on that day when the dead are to be raised and the living changed—'we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.'[2] And that this idea of the simultaneousness of the life of glory

[1] Heb. 2 : 3; Jude 3.

[2] Under this *watching or sleeping*, Cocceius with his customary exuberance of interpretation includes 1. the alternate states of the body in this life;—2. life and death;—3., and principally, spiritual slumber and its opposite. Whitby's restriction of the words to the first of these senses (*natural sleeping and waking*) was preferred also by Musculus, Aretius, Cajetan as cited by Estius, and has been allowed by Calvin, Bengel, Gill, Pelt. I agree with Alford in regarding this sense as 'trifling,' but not in thinking the third sense as any better worth mentioning even as a possibility. That a word is employed with different meanings in the same context need not offend any one familiar with Paul's style.

for all that are Christ's was really in Paul's mind again at the tenth verse is still more evident, not merely from his there resuming the figure of sleep in the sense in which he had first employed it in the fourth chapter, but from the eleventh verse here, where, finding himself, after his reference to the times and seasons, and the duty of believers in relation thereto, brought back to the point previously reached at the end of that chapter—to wit, the everlasting union of the gathered Church with the Saviour—he immediately reiterates the former word of exhortation. There, after speaking of the living and the dead being caught away together in clouds to meet the Lord into the air, and so being ever with the Lord, he added: 'Wherefore comfort one another,' against all these sad mistaken apprehensions of yours, 'with these words.' And just so here; no sooner does that same vision again meet the eye—the watchers and the sleepers entering together into the joy of their Lord—than the writer turns once more, and in the same spirit of cheer, to his weeping brethren: '*Wherefore comfort one another, and edify one the other, as also ye do.*'[1]

For the word '*comfort*' here the margin of our Bible allows us to substitute '*exhort;*' and this more general interpretation is preferred by many; but, as I think, with no advantage to the sense. On the contrary, as all retain '*comfort*' at ch. 4 : 18, so the marked sameness of connection, just pointed out, in the present in-

[1] ἀλλήλους . . . εἰς τὸν ἕνα, καθὼς καί.

stance is decisive for the same rendering here. It is not necessary to regard the mutual edification here required as so directly the object and effect of what is enjoined in the first clause, as to be little more than a repetition of that; as if the Apostle had said: 'Exhort one another, *and so* edify one another.' It is quite as satisfactory to consider, that the removal of all feelings of despondency and alarm, respecting the death of Christians, by means of the mutual and habitual application of the *comforting* truth now exhibited, was an indispensable prerequisite to the right discharge of the general duty of mutual *edification*, whether by word or by example. And so the spirit of the verse will be this: 'Comfort one another as to this matter, *and then*, free from the distracting and paralyzing influence of these vain misgivings, go on edifying one another in all the relations, and by all the means and appliances, of your church fellowship; even as also ye do. Ye do it now, in the midst of your own secret personal sorrows and depressing fears, so great is your love for one another, and your care for one another's happiness and spiritual furtherance. But you will be able to do it more effectively, with the clearer views I have now given you of what awaits us all—those sleeping in Jesus, and us who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord.'

LECTURE XXII.

I. THESS. 5 : 12, 13.—'And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.'

THE writer now proceeds to close the Epistle with certain brief but most weighty exhortations on a variety of personal and relative duties. And first of all he takes up those growing out of the church's relation to her pastors. Let us briefly consider the work of pastors, as it is here described—the corresponding obligations of those to whom they minister—and the importance of the due discharge of those obligations.

I. Wherever Paul planted churches, he ordained them elders. The liberty, wherewith Christ makes His people free,[1] is not, as true liberty never can be, an anarchy. On the contrary, 'the Church, although composed of members who are all called to be filled with the Holy Ghost, has yet been from the beginning not mere Spirit, but the very body of Christ, in which every part has that place and duty which have been as-

[1] Gal. 5 : 1.

signed to it by God, and no other. The Church is the most perfect of all organizations, and Christianity the completion of all ordinances.'[1]

In at least all the larger apostolic churches there appears to have been a plurality of presbyters or bishops. For that these two names are throughout the New Testament used interchangeably, as designating one and the same class of officers, is now generally conceded on all hands; and from our text it is equally apparent what were the duties belonging to the office.

They '*labour among you*,' says Paul, and by that expression two things are plainly indicated. First, the Church itself is their field of labour—'*among you;*'—not, *in you*, as some would explain this, by confining it to the inward culture of the believers; but more generally, in closest connection with you—with special reference to you—for your blessing. This labour, then, was not such manual labour as Paul spoke of in the second chapter as having been performed by himself even to weariness, for his own personal support at Thessalonica; but labour in holy things—spiritual and ecclesiastical labour; none the less, however, real labour, severe and exhausting. This, indeed, is the second point suggested by the phrase: '*who labour*'—or *toil*[2]—'*among you.*' Their office is no sinecure, bringing with it merely honour and emolument. Much

[1] Thiersch, *Hist. of the Christian Church.* London, 1852.

[2] κοπιῶντας.

rather, and first of all, it is a position of strenuous, constant effort, heavy responsibility, and anxious cares. It was so in the beginning, and it is so still.

The violence of persecution, it is true, has now ceased, and it may even be said that the ministers of Christianity enjoy no inconsiderable share of social regard. But I much question, whether in respect of solicitude and toil the condition of the faithful modern pastor be greatly improved since primitive days. It is scarcely to be expected that people in general should readily understand this. But when you reflect on the multiplied intellectual distractions and universal stir of our times—when you remember that the gospel itself is no longer a new thing in the earth, and that the Church has lost the simplicity and fervour of her first love—when you look around on the rivalry, by no means always manly or honourable, of mutually jealous sects—and consider that, in addition to his manifold other burdens, the preacher has frequently in such circumstances to sustain the interest of repeated and lengthened public discourse on the great, unchanging theme of his commission, week after week, and year after year—taking, I say, these things alone into the account, you may not be disposed to suspect me of any great exaggeration, after all, when I assert, as the result of twenty-four years' experience and observation, that, where the preacher makes earnest of his work, and does not, on the one hand, content himself with merely pulling on the endless chain of a continual reiteration,

or, on the other hand, find his satisfaction and his safety in the empty noises of a blustering, self-confident ignorance, but seeks ever, on the contrary, by prayer and reading and meditation, to bring pure beaten oil into the sanctuary of God, 'to cause the lamps to burn continually,'[1] then there is not in any trade or profession, in busy city or thriving village, a harder worker than that man. As has been already hinted, the principle of division of labour, that is found so effective and indispensable in our modern factories, was in the apostolic Church applied much more extensively than it is with us. Not seldom nowadays the heavy laden, single-handed pastor and teacher is expected to do nearly the whole work of whatever kind, that needs to be done in the congregation, and that used formerly to be distributed among many. May not this one fact, my hearers, sufficiently explain why so much of the work is done so poorly?

But, amid all pressures from without the Church, and from within, let these stewards of the Divine mysteries beware of yielding to the temptation that most easily besets them. The Church is 'God's husbandry—God's building;' and the glory of the Church's ministers is that they 'are labourers together with God' in the work of her perfecting.[2] Now, as the grand instrument for this end is the truth as it is in Jesus, so their grand distinction must ever be, that they 'labour in the word and doctrine'[3]—expending their chief strength in the

[1] Lev. 24 : 2. [2] 1 Cor. 3 : 9. [3] 1 Tim. 1 : 5.

preparation and distribution of the daily food of the household, so that all there shall receive each his 'portion of meat in due season.'[1] Only thus do they 'show themselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'[2] For this above all other things—this in a very special sense and peculiar degree—this is their work, this their labour.

It has sometimes been attempted from this verse to construct a classification of ecclesiastical offices. But every attempt of the kind is at once set aside by the form of the original, which clearly[3] represents the identity of '*those who toil among you*' with those who '*are over you in the Lord*,' and with those who '*admonish you*.' Less objectionable is the view, which makes the two last clauses a distributive explanation of the first; as if it were said: *who toil among you, both presiding and admonishing*. But I prefer to regard these latter terms as, not exhausting the departments of ecclesiastical toil, but merely specifying those two—rule and official admonition—that were likeliest to awaken jealousy and resistance.

'*And are over you*.' The word[4] literally means *to stand before*, or at the head of, and it teaches us that, while the ordained servants of Christ are also in another

[1] Luke 12 : 42. [2] 2 Tim. 2 : 15.
[3] By omitting the article in the two latter clauses.
[4] προϊσταμένους.

sense the laborious servants of the Church for Jesus' sake,[1] yet, according to the law of this heavenly kingdom, that 'he that humbleth himself shall be exalted,'[2] to these same servants is entrusted likewise the work of rule in the spiritual community. It is obvious, that the very right to speak and act in the name of Christ necessarily carries with it an aspect of authority. And no less is implied in the names of *pastors* or *shepherds*, *teachers*, *bishops* or *overseers*. If these overseers of the flock are set by the Holy Ghost 'to feed the Church of God,'[3] the exercise of that function, at least in the fulness of its blessing, is plainly impossible, where the episcopal authority is by the Church herself disowned, or even quietly disregarded. 'Remember,' says the writer to the Hebrews (13 : 7), 'them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God.' And this conjunction of the teaching with the ruling power is quite as apparent in Peter's charge to 'the elders,' or *presbyters*, to 'feed the flock of God—taking the oversight.'[4]

It is really, then, brethren, a most wretched mistake, however prevalent it is getting to be, to regard the preacher as simply a sort of popular delegate, or hired agent, bound to receive the instructions, execute the wishes, and flatter the humours, of his constituents. Ministers are the servants, indeed—in the good old English use of that word—but they are not—at least,

[1] 2 Cor. 4 : 5. [2] Luke 14 : 11. [3] Acts 20 : 28.
[4] 1 Pet. 5 : 2 (ποιμάνατε . . . ἐπισκοποῦντες).

they were never meant to be—the creatures, or the slaves, of the churches. Let us not be thought to magnify our office unduly, if we affirm that the faithful minister of the gospel derives his appointment as truly, if not as directly, from the Lord Jesus Christ as Paul himself did. And yet both are properly styled the servants of their brethren: and that on account, not of the source and accountabilities of their office, but of the nature of its duties: just as the angels that excel in strength are said to minister to the heirs of salvation.[1] We are your servants, in so far as necessity is laid upon us, according to the measure of the grace given to us, to 'watch for your souls as they that must give account.'[2]—to consult daily for your best interests—to comfort you in your sorrows—to be helpful to you in your difficulties—and to guide your feet in the path of grace and glory. 'Honourable service, truly'—exclaims John Calvin—'and more to be desired than the noblest princedom!'[3] But be you well assured, my dear brethren, that neither can these blessed ends of the pastoral office be at all adequately promoted, unless at the same time you are enabled to discern in it a higher sanction and validity, than what your election confers—unless, that is, you can recognize in it an ordinance of Christ, not, indeed, for 'lording over the heritages,'[4] but for administering the laws of that house, of which Christ Himself is the sole Master and Lord.

[1] Ps. 103 : 20; Heb. 1 : 14. [2] Heb. 13 : 17.
[3] 'Honorabilis quidem servitus, et quovis principatu potior.'
[4] 1 Pet. 5 : 3 (*κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων*).

For you will observe how the Apostle at once explains, dignifies and limits this office of rule by adding, '*in the Lord*'—'*and are over you in the Lord*'—all Church organization finding its warrant, vitality, and blessing in Him. The whole relation of pastor and people grows out of their joint union with Christ. We are all members one of another, because we all equally belong to that one body whereof He is the Head—being set by God's own hand each in his own place, quickened by one and the same life, and severally furnished for our respective functions according to His good pleasure. The Christian Ministry, therefore, is called to preside only '*in the Lord*'—in vital connection with the Lord and with the Church—under the constraining influence of the love of Christ—with a single eye to His glory—and in strict accordance with the principles and the polity which He has established.

'*And admonish you*,' says Paul finally; and, like the word immediately preceding, this[1] also is a favourite with him—both occurring in the New Testament only in his writings and discourses. The present expression properly means *to put in mind*, and here includes every sort of evangelical statement and appeal, expostulation and warning, whereby the will and affections are enlisted in the regulation of the life; as when in the charge to Timothy it is said: 'Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.'[2]

[1] νουθετοῦντας. [2] 2 Tim. 4: 2.

Such, then, brethren, is the official work of the Christian Pastor, as the same is presented in the passage before us. Speaking generally, he spends his life in Church cares and toils; prominent among which are the duty of presiding in the government and discipline of the Church, and that of 'warning[1] every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.'

II. And now let us consider the correlative obligations of the Church.

1. First, she is to '*know*' these labourers in her Lord's vineyard. Nor is there any necessity for straining, as is commonly done, the ordinary meaning of this verb, so as to include in it such ideas as *caring for, taking an interest in, regarding with favour*, and the like. All this is provided for in the next verse, and is expected to follow as the result of the knowledge here required. Let the Church '*know*' her ministers, as appointed of God for the exercise of these functions. Let her not hide her face from them, nor turn her back on them. Let there be no distance or strangeness between her and them. Rather let her seek an intimate acquaintance with them—their office and work—their fidelity and zeal—their necessities and trials. She will thus be prepared,

2. As the second thing, '*to esteem them very highly*'—

[1] Col. 1 : 28 (*νουθετοῦντες*).

or, as the word[1] might be, at least, more literally rendered, *super-exceedingly*.

And, strong as such an expression sounds, brethren, it is not too strong to represent the sentiments of honourable and dutiful reverence, which Paul everywhere shows that he regarded as due from the Church to her faithful pastors. 'Hold such,' says he, 'in reputation.' Yea, let them 'be counted worthy of double honour.' He speaks of them as 'the glory of Christ.' Nor was it in his estimation any superstitious excess when the Galatians 'received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.' It was rather a legitimate manifestation of their serious sense of what Christ Himself had said: 'He that receiveth you, receiveth me.'[2]

3. But observe, thirdly, that, as ministerial rule in the Church differs essentially from lordship, so the Church's reverence for the ministry differs essentially from a servile fear of man. 'Esteem them very highly *in love*,' says Paul; and 'perfect love casteth out fear.'[3] There may be, and in much the larger part of Christendom there is, a great deal of awe and terror in reference to the priesthood, where there is very little, if any, affectionate esteem.

4. And you will notice, finally, on what this whole

[1] ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ (-ῶς, according to Lachmann, Tischendorf, Alford). See p. 188.

[2] Phil. 2 : 29; 1 Tim. 5 : 17; Gal. 4 : 14; Matt. 10 : 40.

[3] 1 John 4 : 18.

claim for a respectful and tender treatment of Christ's ministers is here made to rest: '*for their work's sake.*'

It is true that to the mere office, whether civil or ecclesiastical, considered as a Divine ordinance, there may properly be shown a measure of respect, that cannot always be felt for the actual incumbent.[1] But in the present instance there was nothing of this painful discordance between the official and the personal. The Thessalonian presbyters, it is evident, were 'making full proof of their ministry,'[2] and therefore on the ground, not merely of their office, but of their character and their work, well deserved all that the Apostle asked for them. For what was that work but 'the edification of the Church—the eternal salvation of souls—the renewing of the world—in a word, the kingdom of God and of Christ?—a work,' adds Calvin, 'of inestimable excellence and dignity. Those, therefore, whom God makes ministers of so great an interest, may well be deemed worthy of honour from us.'[3]

III. The great importance of these duties of the Church to those who serve her in the Lord was our last point; and this is to be inferred from the earnestness with which Paul here enforces their fulfilment. He had just spoken of Christians comforting and edifying

[1] Acts 23 : 5; 1 Pet. 2 : 17. [2] 2 Tim. 4 : 5.

[3] 'Ædificatio Ecclesiæ, æterna animarum salus, mundi reparatio, denique regnum Dei et Christi. Hujus operis inestimabilis est excellentia ac dignitas: ergo quos tantæ rei ministros facit Deus, nobis eximios esse oportet.'

one another; and the connection of the twelfth verse may be of this kind. 'While thus inculcating on all the duty of mutual helpfulness, we *yet*, or *at the same time, plead with peculiar urgency*[1] for the right of your toiling presbyters, your appointed guides and teachers, to the special attention and highest esteem and love of their brethren.' And this, remember, he sought not so much for the sake of the presbyters—though Paul well knew the heart of a minister of Christ, his strength and also his weakness, and sorest discouragements—as for the gospel's sake; for the church's own sake; for the sake of the gracious, glorious results, which the Lord would accomplish by His servants. In this regard that beautiful charge to the Hebrew Christians is well worthy of the earnest consideration of every church: 'Obey them that have the rule over you'—or simply, *your leaders*[2]—'and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it'—do what? the meaning is not, as the ordinary punctuation of our English Bible may have led you to suppose: They watch, in order that they may give in their account with joy; but: Bear yourselves thus dutifully toward them, that they may watch—watch for your souls—'with joy, and not with grief,' or *lamentation:*[3] 'for that'—to wit, a lamenting heavy-hearted ministry—'is unprofitable for you.'[4]

[1] ἐρωτῶμεν δέ. [2] τῶν ἡγουμένων ὑμῶν.
[3] στενάζοντες. [4] Heb. 13: 17.

The last clause of the thirteenth verse, 'And *be at peace among yourselves*'—or without the supplied copula, *Be at peace among yourselves*—has sometimes been treated as an independent exhortation, having no connection with what precedes;[1] while still more have got rid of a supposed harshness in the received text by means of a slight change in the reading,[2] so as to have this sense: 'Be at peace with them,' namely, your pastors and teachers. But for the alteration there is no sufficient authority; nor, on the other hand, is there much difficulty in perceiving a great significance in the ordinary arrangement of the passage as it stands. Perhaps the strongest visible bond of union in any church is a living, efficient pastorate. Where this has secured the general, hearty attachment of the people, and they are living in the loyal and thankful performance of the duties that have already been explained, there cannot possibly be any very serious divisions in the congregation itself. And then it is no less true, that, 'where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work;'[3] including, as of necessity, a greater or less degree of estrangement from the ministry, and to that same degree its paralysis and defeat. So intimate and immediate is the reciprocal action and reaction of the two

[1] Lünemann.

[2] *αὐτοῖς* for *ἑαυτοῖς*. This reading, edited only by Erasmus, has been followed by the Syriac and Vulgate versions, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Luther, Calvin, and others.

[3] James 3 : 16.

general obligations enjoined upon church members in these two verses, as preliminary and fundamental to the specialties that follow.

Only let it never be forgotten, that the '*peace*,' to which you are here exhorted, is not the peace of a sluggish indifference—not a worldly peace—not the peace of a general abandonment to the pleasures of sin, or of a frivolous gayety and mental dissipation. What were all this but the peace of death? No; it is 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeping your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus'[1]—that 'peace' which is one of the earliest and fairest fruits of the Spirit, and inseparable from 'love' and 'joy.'[2]

Dear brethren, let it be the fervent, daily prayer of every member of this Church, that we may all, pastor and people together, find grace so to discharge these our respective mutual duties, as to secure for ourselves and children 'the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.'[3]

[1] Phil. 4:7. [2] Gal. 5:22. [3] Rom. 15:29.

LECTURE XXIII.

I. THESS. 5 : 14, 15.—'Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*. See that none render evil for evil unto any *man;* but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*.'

THE introductory particle[1] rendered '*now*' may be more than a bare mark of transition from one topic to another. It is the same word that is often translated *but;* and it is possible that here also it indicates a connection of thought with what immediately precedes (vs. 12, 13) somewhat of this sort :—'Such are, indeed, the official functions of Christ's ministers among you ; and such too your duty and interest, by keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, to fit yourselves for receiving the fulness of blessing which a faithful ministry is intended by Christ to convey. *But* do not suppose that you are thereby discharged from all further care one of another. No ; *we exhort you, brethren*—all of you, as many as stand in this spiritual affinity—to look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others,[2] and to be

[1] δέ. [2] Phil. 2 : 4.

ready at all times, and according to the variety of individual cases, to coöperate with your pastors in promoting their welfare.'

There is nothing, therefore, in these verses, as there is nothing in what follows, that requires us to think of the Apostle as here turning round to the presbyters, and addressing them on the right discharge of their appropriate duties. The duties, we shall find, equally befit all members of the household of faith.

1. '*Warn them that are unruly*'—*admonish the disorderly*;—for the verb is the same as in the twelfth verse; and, indeed, it is this circumstance that has mainly induced a few eminent interpreters in ancient and in modern times[1] to adopt the view to which I have just adverted. But there is certainly no loss of force or beauty in explaining the repetition as I have already done. 'No doubt, it is a most important part of the pastoral work to *admonish you* of every evil tendency that arises in the Church. But see that ye also *admonish one another*.[2] Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness,[3] and think not to leave all concern of this kind to your church officers.'

The particular fault here specified is *disorderliness*—that breaking the ranks[4] of social and ecclesiastical life,

[1] Chrysostom, Œcumenius, Theophylact, Estius, Benson, Macknight, Bloomfield, Trollope, Peile, Conybeare, and others.

[2] Col. 3: 16. Comp. 2 Thess. 3: 6, 15. [3] Gal. 6: 1.

[4] ἀτάκτους—a military term.

which, as we formerly saw,[1] was a besetting sin of the primitive churches, not excepting the Thessalonian. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'[2] Nor is it to be wondered at, if, in times of special religious agitation, this liberty is ever apt, through human weakness and corruption, to run into a fanatical restlessness, insubordination and license. There is no reason, however, to suppose, that at Thessalonica matters had yet gone farther in this direction, than the indulgence of a spirit of undue excitement in regard especially to Christ's second coming, and what may readily be conceived as resulting from that—a paralysis of interest and effort in all secular affairs and occupations. But even this the Apostle is anxious, for the credit of the gospel and for the sake of his brethren themselves, to have instantly corrected. He therefore desires that *the disorderly* be *admonished*. Whatever sharpness of reproof might be needed to repress so great an evil, must not be spared. By his own explicit teachings and personal example, he had clearly shown them in the beginning what a Christian's duty is in these relations; and already in this Epistle he had entered his affectionate protest against any misapprehension or neglect of the lesson. Now he lays upon the Church itself the responsibility of renewing and enforcing these repeated instructions for the reform of actual abuses. He would have it ever and everywhere

[1] See p. 239. [2] 2 Cor. 3 : 17.

remembered, that 'God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.'[1]

Need I add that this fidelity of Christian admonition, so far from being inconsistent with an 'unfeigned love of the brethren,'[2] is just one of its very noblest manifestations?

2. The next point in this exhortation to the brethren is, that they should '*comfort the feeble-minded*,' or *encourage the faint-hearted*.[3] For the reference is not at all to the intellectually feeble, but to such as by reason of persecution (ch. 2 : 14), or the death of friends (ch. 4 : 13), or for any other cause, were dispirited, disheartened, desponding.

Let these, says Paul, be *comforted* and *encouraged* by their brethren, in the spirit of that gracious Lord who 'raiseth them that are bowed down,' and gives rest to the weary and heavy laden.[4] In what tones of deepest tenderness did He Himself say to such: 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid'![5] And whence, but from the heart of Jesus, comes the Spirit who still breathes in the Church, and abides with her as her Comforter, till her Lord return? It is surely, then, a natural and becoming thing that they, also, in whom that Spirit dwells, should 'comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith they them-

[1] 1 Cor. 14 : 33. [2] 1 Pet. 1 : 22.
[3] παραμυθεῖσθε τοὺς ὀλιγοψύχους. [4] Ps. 146 : 8; Matt. 11 : 28, 29.
[5] John 14 : 27.

selves are comforted of God.'[1] They alone understand the meaning, and realize the force, of the apostolic appeal: 'If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies.'[2]

3. Nearly allied to this duty of *encouraging the faint-hearted* is the third office of Christian charity here mentioned, that of '*supporting the weak*'—*holding on*, as we might say, *to*[3] them that are ready to fall. In consequence of defective knowledge, or of the remaining influence of Jewish prejudice or pagan superstition, they might be 'weak in the faith.'[4] Or their temporal circumstances might be such as to render it difficult for them to provide for their own support.[5] In either case, they must not be mortified, or neglected, and shoved out of sight. Lay hold of their weakness; sustain it, and strengthen it. Be 'eyes to the blind' and 'feet to the lame.'[6] 'Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees . . . lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.'[7] Thus 'ought ye who are strong to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please yourselves.'[8] In no other way, than by this 'bearing of one another's burdens,' can ye so effectively 'fulfil the law of Christ';[9] in

[1] 2 Cor. 1 : 4. [2] Phil. 2 : 1. [3] *ἀντέχεσθε.* [4] Rom. 14 : 1.
[5] Acts 20 : 35; see the Greek. [6] Job. 29 : 15.
[7] Heb. 12 : 12, 13. [8] Rom. 15 : 1.
[9] Gal. 6 : 2; *ἀναπληρώσατε, fill up, fulfil thoroughly.*

no other way tread more closely in the footsteps of our Great Exemplar, on whom our help was laid, and who, though Himself the Power of God and the Wisdom of God, 'breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax.'[1]

4. Then, adds the Apostle, '*be patient*'—*long-suffering*[2]—'*toward all;*' toward *the weak*, if they should hang longer or more heavily on your hands, than you think is either needful or proper;—toward *the faint-hearted*, should your words of cheer fail at once to rouse them;—toward *the disorderly* even, in case there be no immediate good result of your admonitions;—yes, *toward all* the brethren, with none of whom will there lack occasions for the exercise of that love which 'suffereth long and is kind;'[3]—and not only so, but '*toward all* men,' the most wayward and perverse, your bitterest enemies and persecutors. Remember how, notwithstanding 'all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,'[4] and the manifold provocations even of His children, your Heavenly Father is 'long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,'[5] and showers meanwhile the blessings of His providence on all alike—'on the evil and on the good . . . on the just and on the unjust.'[6]

5. Here, you perceive, comes into view what is per-

[1] Is. 42 : 3. [2] μακροθυμεῖτε. [3] 1 Cor. 13 : 4.
[4] Rom. 1 : 18. [5] 2 Peter 3 : 9. [6] Matt. 5 : 45.

haps the severest trial of a man's Christian character—I mean the Christian law regarding the treatment of those who injure us. The writer, therefore, takes it up by itself, and makes a separate point of it, at the same time signalizing at once its difficulty and its importance by a challenge of special attention: '*See that none render evil for evil unto any one.*'[1] No matter who the parties are, or what may have been, or may now be, their relations. And equally unimportant are all questions as to the precise nature and aggravation of the offense. The rule is absolute and unconditional: '*See that no one render evil for evil unto any one.*' The law of retaliation is thus utterly disowned. However agreeable to the natural sense of resentment, and however consistent with the highest strain of heathen virtue or Pharisaic righteousness, it violates the spirit of love, and must therefore be cast out of the domain of the Church.

In a celebrated treatise expressly devoted to ethical discussion, the eloquent moralist of Pagan Rome forbids only the *unprovoked* injuring of others.[2] And you remember how they who 'sat in Moses' seat'[3] perverted the equitable retributions of theocratic justice—'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'—into a measure and justification of private revenge.[4] How

[1] τινι.

[2] Cicero, *De Off.* I. 7: 'Justitiæ primum munus est, ut ne cui quis noceat, nisi lacessitus injuria.'

[3] Matt. 23: 2. [4] Matt. 5: 38.

marked the contrast of the Christian rule! '*See*'—let every man keep strict and jealous watch over his own heart, and, as far as possible, let him also by counsel and by example restrain those around him—'*See that none render evil for evil unto any one.*' 'I say unto you, That ye resist not evil'[1]—such was the original, authoritative interdict of the Lord Himself, which is but repeated in various phrase by his servants; as when Paul says again, in writing to the Romans: 'Recompense to no man evil for evil. . . . Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves.'[2] And so the impetuous temper of that other disciple, who 'stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear,'[3] had learned to bow its neck to the yoke of the unresisting Jesus, when he too afterwards cautioned his suffering brethren against 'rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing.'[4]

It should, indeed, be remarked, that what the text prohibits is, not any necessary measures of precaution or self-defense, nor even an appeal for redress of grievances, or for the punishment of wrong-doers, to the public magistrate as God's minister, ordained by Him to 'attend continually upon this very thing.'[5] Paul himself 'appealed unto Cæsar.'[6] But to '*render evil for evil*,' as if the mere exchange of blow for blow were of itself an allowable or admirable thing—to inflict upon another, though our worst enemy, pain or damage of

[1] Matt. 5 : 39. [2] Rom. 12 : 17, 19. [3] Matt. 26 : 51.
[4] 1 Peter, 3 : 9. [5] Rom. 13 : 1, 6. [6] Acts 25 : 11.

person, or property, or reputation, for its own sake, or simply to make him suffer because he has made us suffer—in a word, the vindictive spirit, and whatever it prompts to—every thing of that sort is put under the stern ban of the gospel, as 'savouring not the things that be of God, but those that be of men'[1]—as 'earthly, sensual, devilish.'[2]

Nor is this all. Hard as we find it, brethren, to practise, or even to remember, the lesson of strict abstinence from a revengeful, malignant retaliation, at the very time when we are smarting and burning under unjust assaults, whether of violence or of treachery, yet even this is but the negative and smallest part of a Christian's duty toward his fellow-Christians and his fellow-men: '*See that none render evil for evil unto any one; but*'—in direct, active opposition to every such impulse and tendency—'*ever follow that which is good*'—*the good thing*[3]—the right thing—the kind thing—'good and acceptable before God'[4]—'good and profitable unto men'[5]—and this '*both among yourselves*,' or *toward one another*; '*and toward all*,'[6] Jews and heathens, friends and foes alike. It is true, '*that which is good*' will not always be that which is pleasing to the objects of your benevolence. But, even in what they may regard as severe measures on your part, be sure that your motive as toward them is a kind one; just as a father pities the child

[1] Matt. 16:23. [2] James 3:15. [3] τὸ ἀγαθόν.
[4] 1 Tim. 5:4. [5] Tit. 3:8. [6] εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας.

whom he chastises, and chastises because he loves. 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.'[1]

And observe, that this work of beneficence is not to be with us an incidental thing, or a thing of fits and starts, or the result of an inevitable solicitation, or the careless or impatient giving of a dollar to rid ourselves of annoyance. It is to be the aim and business of life. We are to '*follow*' it—or rather, to *pursue*[2] it, with spontaneous, strenuous, habitual effort, and a 'patient continuance.'[3] Our means of blessing the Church or the world may seem to be very limited. We may have but 'two mites'[4] to cast into the Lord's treasury; or 'a cup of cold water only'[5] for one of His disciples; or nothing more even than a kind look, and a kind word, and an 'effectual, fervent prayer'[6] for any one, however dear to us. Or circumstances in other respects may be adverse, and such as to tempt us to quite the opposite course. Our character and motives may be misunderstood, and in ignorance or in malice misrepresented daily. Our best offices may be received with cold disdain, and repaid with ingratitude and wrong. Still, nothing of all this will exempt us from the binding force of this universal law. '*Ever follow*'—*always*, on all occasions, with whatever variety of outward method, in the face of whatever difficulties and provocations, *al-*

[1] Gal. 6 : 10. [2] διώκετε. [3] Rom. 2 : 7.
[4] Mark 12 : 42. [5] Matt. 10 : 42. [6] James 5 : 16.

ways pursue—'that which is good, both toward one another, and toward all.' 'Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'[1]

From all that has been said we readily infer the transcendent glory of the gospel, considered merely as a system of morals. What a Mutual Benefit Society were the Church—what a mighty organ of brotherly counsel and succour to her families and members—were she pervaded throughout, and governed and impelled in all her action, by the spirit of her 'high calling of God in Christ Jesus'![2] The objection, indeed, is sometimes made, and is, I doubt not, much oftener felt than expressed, that in some of its requirements, as, for instance, those respecting the forgiveness of injuries and the treatment of enemies, it rises so 'far above out of our sight,'[3] as to be really inapplicable to the present life of man. It is by no means in the doctrinal region only of Christianity, that we meet with 'hard sayings,'[4] but quite as frequently perhaps among its precepts. Nay, the whole law, as summed up by our Lord in the two commandments of loving God with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind, and one's neighbour as one's self,[5] is so 'exceeding broad,'[6] and high, and glorious in holiness, that God's own children

[1] Rom. 12:20, 21. [2] Phil. 3:14. [3] Ps. 10:5.
[4] John 6:60. [5] Matt. 22:37, 39. [6] Ps. 119:96.

never place themselves face to face with it, and measure themselves, their conduct and their motives, thereby, but, if then thrown back on the ground of their personal righteousness, they would be ready to cry out with the prophet in the temple: 'Woe is me! for I am undone,'[1] or with Peter on the sea of Galilee: 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'[2]

But the sceptical feeling to which I have referred, and this unquestionable fact of the Christian experience, that, to whatever point we may have attained in the Divine life, we still see before us and above us serene heights of holiness shining afar, instead of implying any defect or excess or unsuitableness in the law, serve rather to demonstrate the terrible disorder and weakness wrought by sin in our common nature, and how low that nature has in consequence sunk down from its original standard of excellence.

For it is no less true, on the other hand, that in every man—in every man, at least, in whose heart has shined any beam of spiritual illumination—there is that which, out of the very depths of conscious debasement and impotence, yet 'consents unto the law that it is good.'[3] And then the same gospel which unfolds, and, so to speak, sublimates the idea of a legal perfection, at the same time sets before us its living embodiment in the person of 'the man Christ Jesus.'[4] Follow Him, my hearers, as He 'goes about doing good'[5]—'enduring

[1] Is. 6: 5. [2] Luke 5: 8. [3] Rom. 7: 16.
[4] 1 Tim. 2: 5. [5] Acts 10: 38.

such contradiction of sinners against Himself'[1]—'when He is reviled, reviling not again; when He suffers, threatening not;'[2]—then take your stand near the cross—the cross of Him who on the mountain taught His disciples, saying: 'Love your enemies'—with the love of pity, the love of genuine good-will, the love of prompt and untiring effort in their behalf—'love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;'[3]—and now, amidst the darkness and the shame, the railing and the scoffing, the bitter pains and sorrows of death, hear that same voice pleading with Heaven for the forgiveness of His murderers,—and oh, what remains of severe and impracticable in any commandment of Christ? To use the language of one, who was indeed an eye-witness of these very scenes, 'His commandments are not grievous.'[4]

And, in like manner, 'God commendeth *His* love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'[5] Here then, brethren—not in the maxims of this world's honour, nor in the ignoble, brutal impulses of a vindictive retaliation—but in the love of God and His Son—in the teaching, and example, and death of the world's Saviour—are we to look for the law, and the motive, of the Christian life. Only thus may we 'become[6] the children of our Father which is in heaven,' and 'be perfect, even as our Father which

[1] Heb. 12 : 3. [2] 1 Pet. 2 : 23. [3] Matt. 5 : 44.
[4] 1 John 5 : 3. [5] Rom. 5 : 8. [6] Matt. 5 : 45 (γένησθε), 48.

is in heaven is perfect.' We need but to enter more deeply into the life and heart of Jesus, that we may feel how easy and natural, not to say how noble and beautiful, is this Divine perfection in the perfect man. And if, dear hearers, we would not only contemplate and admire, but imitate, this great Pattern of all the redeemed, let us devoutly and continually implore the indwelling of that gracious Spirit, who 'helpeth our infirmities,'[1] and gradually, but surely, fashions the Church into the likeness of her Lord.

[1] Rom. 8 : 26.

LECTURE XXIV.

I. THESSALONIANS 5 : 16.—'Rejoice evermore.'

FROM the sphere of social duties the writer here passes again into the inner circle of individual experience. And his first word is: '*Rejoice evermore*'—*always rejoice.*[1]

It is a brave word. Or may it not rather be called a rash and unseasonable one? In a world so full of sin, sorrow, and death—in a church so sorely tried—might it not even sound like thoughtless mockery of others' woes?

But then it is not in this place alone that Paul summons his afflicted brethren to joy—present joy—perpetual joy. To the Philippians he calls as with ever renewed trumpet tones: 'Rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice.'[2] Everywhere, indeed, he makes it apparent that he considers this, not only one of the highest privileges, but

[1] πάντοτε χαίρετε. [2] Phil. 3 : 1 ; 4 : 4 (πάλιν ἐρῶ).

one of the most urgent and comprehensive obligations, of the Christian. Nay, he speaks of it as something to which he himself and his fellow Apostles had actually attained. Among the many other paradoxes exemplified in their career, they were, he says, 'sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing;'[1]—thus placing in sharpest relief what might be deemed contradictory and impossible in the alleged harmony of emotions apparently incompatible.

That this, however, was no vain boast on his part, and that there really does exist ample ground for the exhortation before us, will be sufficiently apparent, if we advert briefly to the deep, perennial fountains of the believer's joy.

I. Consider in the first place, as preliminary to all the rest, his *relation to Christ.*

'My Beloved is mine, and I am His'[2]—let a man be able with some degree of comfortable assurance to say that, and is it not enough of itself to explain and justify whatever seeming incongruity between his circumstances of outward trial and the manifestation of a joyful spirit? What is there that our ruined nature needs, which it cannot find in Christ?—atoning blood, to cleanse from all sin—a righteousness, in which not even the eye of the Divine holiness can discern spot or blemish—subduing, renewing power, to form us into the Divine image—a Teacher, to instruct our ignorance—a Friend, to cheer us—a kindred High Priest,

[1] 2 Cor. 6: 10. [2] Cant 2: 16.

to intercede for us in the heavenly places, and reconcile us to God—a wise, faithful, gentle, almighty Shepherd, to lead us, and feed us, and guard us through the wilderness into the bright, spacious, ever fresh and unfading pastures of eternity;—yes, dear hearers, we all feel that we do need all that; and again I say, we have it all in Christ.

It is, then, nothing wonderful that they, who can rightfully claim such a Saviour as their own, should 'rejoice in Christ Jesus.'[1] This is mentioned as one of their characteristics; and there is no better definition of a Christian—no surer test of regeneration. 'Him having not seen, they love; in Him, though now they see Him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'[2] And so it has been from the beginning. 'Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day: and he saw it, and was glad.'[3] And all the successive generations of God's justified Israel glory in that same name of Jehovah, their Righteousness and Strength.[4] They rejoice in Him as the eternal Son—as 'the Word made flesh'—the 'Mediator between God and men'[5]—their own Prophet, Priest, and King—their 'all and in all.'[6] And they '*always rejoice*' in Him. For this is 'the foundation of God.'[7] Amid the change and flow of all things around, it remains steadfast and unmoveable—'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.'[8] What He was to patriarchs, apos-

[1] Phil. 3:3. [2] 1 Peter 1:8. [3] John 8:56. [4] Is. 45:24, 25.
[5] John 1:14; 1 Tim. 2:5. [6] Col. 3:11.
[7] 2 Tim. 2:19. [8] Heb. 13:8.

tles, and martyrs, in all varieties of their earthly condition, and in their hours of sorest extremity, that He still is to every troubled, dying saint.

II. Consider, secondly, the believer's *relations to God.* 'Being justified by faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'[1] His 'fellowship is truly with the Father.'[2] He no longer seeks to hide himself from God's presence, or to stifle even the remembrance of Him. On the contrary, the strong bent of his thoughts and affections is toward the Supreme Being, 'as the heart panteth after the water brooks.'[3] With David, he 'delights himself in the Lord.'[4] With Paul, he 'joys in God.'[5] When 'riches,' therefore, 'make themselves wings,' and 'fly away as an eagle toward heaven'[6]—when friends fail us by desertion or death—when the world casts us out, and passes coldly by—or disease and the gathering infirmities of age unfit us for worldly pleasures—oh, what joy may still abide in that soul, which even then, sitting solitary in the dust, looks up trustingly in the face of God, and calmly says: 'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.'[7] 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I

[1] Rom. 5: 1. [2] 1 John 1: 3. [3] Ps. 42: 1. [4] Ps. 37: 4.
[5] Rom. 5: 11. [6] Prov. 23: 5. [7] Ps. 16: 5.

will joy in the God of my salvation.'[1] For here again, as this is a satisfying, so is it also a sure and unfailing portion. It is a 'portion for ever.'[2] It is 'the fountain of living waters'[3]—pure—inexhaustible—following the pilgrim of faith through all his wanderings — and 'springing up into everlasting life.'[4] If that portion, dear brethren, be yours—if from the cares and conflicts of life, from 'the burden and heat of the day,'[5] you can at all times turn aside, and refresh your hearts from this 'river of God which is full of water,'[6] you at least will not regard it as an inconceivable thing, that a child of God may even in this world fulfil the apostolic exhortation, and '*always rejoice.*'

III. Or we may contemplate the same great and blessed truth under still another aspect, if we remember that *the Holy Spirit, whom the Saviour sent as the Comforter of His bereaved Church, 'that He might abide with us for ever,'*[7] *is Himself the Author of this joy.* For which reason our Apostle distinguishes it in the first chapter of this Epistle as the 'joy of the Holy Ghost.' And, when praying for the brethren at Rome, that 'the God of hope would fill them with all joy and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope,' he is careful to add, 'through the power of the Holy Ghost.'[8]

This gracious office the Spirit fulfils by 'receiving of

[1] Hab. 3 : 17, 18. [2] Ps. 73 : 26. [3] Jerem. 2 : 13. [4] John 4 : 14.
[5] Matt. 20 : 12. [6] Ps. 65 : 9. [7] John 14 : 16. [8] Rom. 15 : 13.

Christ's, and showing it unto us.'[1] As Christ Himself is anointed with the 'oil of gladness above His fellows,'[2] so from His sacred head it descends 'to the skirts of His garments.'[3] 'Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.'[4] And the great Organ of communication is the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit in like manner leads the soul to that other infinite source of joy, the love of God.[5] Sent into the heart as 'the Spirit of adoption,' He 'beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.'[6] And not only so, but He Himself 'is the earnest of our inheritance,'[7] and alone 'makes us meet' for its enjoyment.[8]

In whatever heart, then, be it of the humblest slave. this glorious Inmate dwells, may it not rightfully be expected to hold perpetual festival? What greater affront to His condescending presence, and benignant design, and merciful operation, than a spirit of sadness, dejection, and as it were funereal gloom?

IV. Among the secondary, derivative sources, as they may be called, of Christian joy, special mention is due *to the word of God, with all its 'exceeding great and precious promises.'*[9] These are to the Church 'the breasts of her consolations,'[10] and therefore the joy she

[1] John 16: 15. [2] Ps. 45: 7. [3] Ps. 133: 2.
[4] John 1: 16. [5] Rom. 5: 5. [6] Rom. 8: 15–17.
[7] Eph. 1: 14. [8] 2 Cor. 5: 5; Col. 1: 12. [9] 2 Pet. 1: 4.
[10] Is. 66: 11.

draws from them is the 'joy of faith.'[1] Take only one or two as a sample of the rest:—

'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;'[2]—neither in sickness, nor in poverty, nor in danger by land or sea, nor in old age, nor when forsaken of all other friends.

'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee;'[3]—no matter what thy burden is, whether of sin, or of care;—and no matter how sharp and heavy.

'All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose,'[4]—the unlikeliest things, things seemingly the most adverse, so work, and that no less surely, no less directly even, than other things of a quite different aspect. Says the Apostle, 'We know' this;—as if he spoke not only from the Divine testimony, but from abundant experience of his own. And, dear brethren, what a light, as from the face of God, is thus shed down into the bosom of the darkest clouds and storms of life! These too are heavenly angels, though in disguise—the veiled messengers and ministers of infinite wisdom and love;—and there is not one of them but bears in his hand, from Him who sends him forth, this additional pledge: 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be

[1] Phil. 1; 25.
[2] Heb. 13: 5.
[3] Ps. 55: 22.
[4] Rom. 8: 28.

able to bear it;'[1]—*a way to escape*—if in no other way, then through the gates of death. As in the hour of Israel's perplexity and fear, He will open for you a pathway through the floods, and will Himself be with you there, to shield, and guide, and comfort you.

Now in these and numberless other such promises, covering every possible need and exigency of the present life, the believer rejoices, and should '*always rejoice.*' For this word of God 'liveth and abideth for ever,'[2] and its pledges, every one of them, are punctually redeemed in the life and death of every one of His children.

But it is on the illimitable future beyond the grave, that the gospel concentrates its radiance. It 'brings life and immortality to light.'[3] As the consummation and crown of all the promises, and so as the end of our faith, and the fulfilling of our joy, it foretells the return of the Saviour, the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting of all the redeemed in the rest and glory of the kingdom. And shall not the assured expectants of such a destiny rejoice—'*always rejoice*'—whatever befall them here on the way? We know how hope exhilarates the heart of man, and makes his face to shine. And so this element likewise enters largely into the joy of the Church. She 'rejoices in hope—in hope of the glory of God.'[4]

[1] 1 Cor. 10: 13. [3] 1 Pet. 1: 23.
[2] 2 Tim. 1: 10. [4] Rom. 5: 2; 12: 12.

V. Another thing to be considered is this, that the continual rejoicing to which we are here exhorted is intimately *connected with a life of active Christian beneficence.* Indeed, this very connection has been thought[1] to have suggested to the Apostle the juxtaposition of this sixteenth verse to the inculcation in the verses immediately preceding it of the claims of Christian charity. And so also it may be worth observing, that, when Paul enumerates the fruits of the Spirit, he mentions 'love' first of all, and then, next to it, 'joy.'[2]

Certain it is, brethren, that there is a 'comfort of love,'[3] and that not only for the loved object, but for the loving heart itself. For many kinds of mental depression there is perhaps no readier or more effectual cure, than to engage ourselves in some work for doing good to others. He who devotes himself, in the spirit of the Lord Jesus, and according as he has opportunity, to making those around him happy, cannot fail of his reward in a double portion of happiness for himself. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'[4] For it is at once to reflect the image, and taste the blessedness, of Him who is 'good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works.'[5]

Here, then, is another well-spring of joy, at which we may at all times refresh our souls. 'The poor,' the sorrowful, the comfortless, 'we have with us always, and whensoever we will we may do them good.'[6]

[1] As by Chrysostom. [2] Gal. 5 : 22. [3] Phil. 2 : 1.
[4] Acts 20 : 35. [5] Ps. 145 : 9. [6] Mark 14 : 7.

VI. I shall only add, that the principle of our last remark admits of application to *every other department of the practical Christian life.* And for this reason, as was formerly hinted, the brief precept before us is really one of the very largest import. Sin, a defiled conscience, the sense of guilt—these are the things that darken and disturb all the fountains of joy; whereas a holy life—a careful walking in the paths of righteousness—daily to 'exercise one's self to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men'[1] —this of itself is 'a perpetual feast,'[2] and it leads the soul beside the still waters. To say to the children of God, therefore: '*Always rejoice,*' is just equivalent to saying: 'Live up to your high privilege. Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.[3] Perfect holiness in the fear of God.[4] Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.'[5]

I have thus sought, dear brethren, to guide you to the sources of Christian joy in the relations of the believer to Christ, to God, and the Holy Spirit—in the promises of the Word—and in a loving, beneficent, and holy life. But, while looking, as we have done, into these wells of salvation one after the other, let us not think that any one of them exists apart, and uncon-

[1] Acts 24: 16. [2] Milton, *Comus*, 478. [3] Eph. 4: 1.
[4] 2 Cor. 7: 1. [5] Jude 20: 21.

nected with the rest. It is with them as with the great system of our northern lakes. The same 'rain' from heaven—one and the same Divine fulness—'filleth' them all,[1] and overflows at last into the 'great and wide sea.'[2]

All this while, however, you may have felt a difficulty in reconciling the apostolic injunction with the manifold painful experiences of God's people in this world, their sorrows, and tears. In regard to this let it be observed,

1. In the first place, that these stormy winds of life may, after all, be said to agitate but the surface of the soul, and reach not to the silent depths. As the iceberg from the pole is sometimes seen floating into the sunshine and warmth of the south, impelled against breeze and tide by the great under-currents, so, in the face of all temporary, outward conflicts, the strong, ceaseless tendency of the renewed nature is still onward to joy.

2. Then, secondly, you are to remember, that it is not the measure of actual and ordinary attainment, that determines Christ's law, and our duty, but what is through Divine grace attainable, and in itself accordant with the spirit of faith and hope. And,

3. Finally, I appeal to the history of the Church, and to the hearts, it may be, of some suffering children of God here present. Both will bear me out in asserting it to be quite a possible thing, that, where sorrow

[1] Ps. 84 : 6. [2] Ps. 104 : 25.

abounds, joy should much more abound. The Apostles themselves, when first they heard from the lips of their Lord those lofty words: 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake. . . . Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad,'[1] may have accounted that too a hard saying. They understood it better, when, after their first 'trial of cruel mockings and scourgings'[2] for Christ's sake, and the gospel's, 'they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.'[3] Ever afterwards they thus 'gloried in tribulation,'[4] and probably found it to be the most rapturous, triumphant moment of their life, when they bared their necks to the stroke of martyrdom.

The same spirit of heroism breathed in their followers. You remember how the Thessalonians 'received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost,'[5] and how, among the churches generally of Macedonia, 'the abundance of their joy . . . abounded in a great trial of affliction.'[6] They had all, it seems, learned the lesson, to 'count it all joy, when they fell into divers temptations.'[7]

And, as I have said, it may be that some of you too, my hearers, though 'ye have not yet resisted unto blood,

[1] Matt. 5 : 10–12. [2] Heb. 11 : 36.
[3] Acts 5 : 41. [4] Rom. 5 : 2. [5] 1 Thess. 1 : 6.
[6] 2 Cor. 8 : 2. [7] James 1 : 2.

striving against sin,'[1] do know the luxury of Christian tears—the blessedness of 'humbling yourselves under the mighty hand of God,'[2] even when that hand is armed with the rod of fatherly correction. Oh, is it not joy enough for the disciple, that in anything—be it even in the fellowship of suffering—he is made like unto his Lord?[3] But you know also that your 'light affliction, which is but for a moment,' is a badge of your own sonship,[4] and an essential means of your sanctification,[5] while at the same time it also 'worketh for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'[6]

Cherish, then, dear brethren, and in all your service manifest, a spirit which so honours your profession and your Lord. '*Always rejoice;*' and let 'the joy of the Lord be your strength'[7] for duty and for trial.

In conclusion, let all learn to estimate aright the miserable ignorance of the calumny, that true religion is under any possible circumstances unfavourable to true happiness. No, no, dear friends, God formed man at the first for joy. And now that at the price of blood —the blood of His own Son—He has redeemed us, it is still only for yet greater joy. Be persuaded, that a creature made in the image of God must be capable of far higher and better things than 'the pleasures of sin,'[8] or 'the laughter of the fool,'[9] or the indulgences of

[1] Heb. 12 : 4. [2] 1 Pet. 5 : 6.
[3] Phil. 3 : 10; Rom. 8 : 17; 2 Cor. 4 : 10; Col. 1 : 24, &c.
[4] Heb. 12 : 6–8. [5] Rom. 5 : 3–5; Heb. 12 : 11.
[6] 2 Cor : 4 : 17, 18. [7] Nehem. 8 : 10. [8] Heb. 11 : 25.
[9] Eccl. 7 : 6.

wealth, or the pomp of power, or the merely secular gratifications of intellect and taste. Not for these things did the Son of God 'endure the cross, despising the shame.' Behold Him 'set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'[1] It is scarcely, indeed, for us to speak of that joy, which shall eternally fill the heart of Jesus, as the reward of His obedience unto death. But, when He comes again 'the second time, without sin unto salvation,'[2] this is what He Himself will say to every good and faithful servant: 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'[3] It is a characteristic note of John Howe on that most gracious word: 'We are told of their entrance into joy, nothing of their passing out of it any more; the last thing we hear of them is, that they are gone into joy.'

[1] Heb. 12:2. [2] Heb. 9:28. [3] Matt. 25:21.

LECTURE XXV.

I. THESSALONIANS 5 : 17.—'Pray without ceasing.'

THIS precept, '*Pray without ceasing*'—or, according to the form of the original,[1] *unceasingly pray*—comes immediately after the summons to *rejoice always*. So far, therefore, is that joy from being the mere buoyancy of the animal life, or the elation of self-confidence, that it exists only where there is an abiding sense of absolute dependence upon God.

The same connection between joy and prayer is indicated in Rom. 12 : 12 : 'Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;' and in Phil. 4 : 4–7 : 'Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all under-

[1] ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε.

standing shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.'

Prayer may be defined generally as the address of the soul to God, in the consciousness of its own need, and in faith of the Divine mercy and all-sufficiency. For a creature with such feelings and convictions to pray is just as natural, as for a hungry child to ask bread from a parent.

A vain philosophy, it is true, has often objected: 'What profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?[1] Will the Infinite God concern Himself with the petty affairs of men? Or can our feeble and distant cries affect in any way the onward march of His providence?' But these cavils of a practical atheism have never satisfied the reason, any more than they have been able to paralyze the instincts and aspirations of the heart. 'Should not a people seek unto their God?'[2] is a challenge that commands the ready assent of nations, civilized or savage. In all ages heathendom has multiplied its altars, and sought to propitiate the higher powers by sacrifice and prayer. And especially before the light of revelation, and the experience of the Church, the doubts and speculations of unbelief on this point vanish like empty mist.

'O Thou that hearest prayer!'[3]—that is one of the many gracious Scriptural designations of the only living and true God. And so the place which He chooses to

[1] Job 21 : 15. [2] Is. 8 : 19. [3] Ps. 65 : 2.

put His name there—where He meets and blesses His worshippers—'shall be called a house of prayer for all people.'[1] But in vain should I attempt to enumerate all the motives and encouragements which the Bible furnishes to engage us in this direct intercourse of the soul with 'the Father of spirits.'[2] They are numerous as our own trials, and necessities, and temptations, and weaknesses, or as His mercies and resources. And nothing, I believe, more clearly demonstrates the desperate wickedness of our nature, than that, in spite of all these, and all the invitations and promises of the word, and all the examples there recorded of effectual prayer, men in general continue so averse to this spiritual exercise, and Christians themselves are so cold and intermittent therein.

Reflect, brethren, on what we are and what God is; and then say if it would not be a wonder of condescension, that should allow us even once in our lifetime to 'take upon us to speak unto the Lord.'[3] But, behold, it is God that 'calls, and we refuse; He stretches out His hand, and no man regardeth.'[4] He seats Himself on a throne of grace, and there He 'waits that He may be gracious unto us,'[5] and He bids us draw near and receive, simply for the asking, all blessings. But, alas, how few thus come! And, of those who do, how many approach under the impulse rather of custom or conscious duty, than of fervent duty and filial expectation!

[1] Is. 56 : 7. [2] Heb. 12 : 9. [3] Gen. 18 : 27.
[4] Prov. 1 : 24. [5] Is. 30 : 18.

Meanwhile, our unbelief and unfaithfulness have no power to change that economy of the Divine wisdom and love, according to which he 'that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened'[1]—a principle of administration by which the glory of God and the good of man are equally promoted. From the days when Abraham pleaded for Sodom, and Jacob wrestled at the fords of Peniel, it has been abundantly verified, and it is so still, in the lives of God's children. Apart even from the many express assurances of Scripture, there will be found enough in the records of sacred and Christian biography to justify us in believing, that in nothing does there obtain a more direct and invariable proportion, than between a man's habits of prayer and the holiness of his character and the usefulness of his life. All of God's most eminent servants under either dispensation—as David and Daniel, Paul and Luther—have been preëminently men of prayer. Charged with the cares of empire or of Christendom, they yet seem to have made prayer the great, paramount business of life—seeking in that the wisdom, love, courage, and strength required for all other business. In the latter, they wrought according to their measure; in the former, they engaged God Himself to work for the furtherance of His cause, and the glory of His name. They therefore 'gave themselves continually to prayer.'[2] They 'laboured fervently'—or, as the word is, *agonized*,

[1] Matt. 7 : 8. [2] Acts 6 : 4.

strove—'in prayers.'[1] They 'watched unto prayer.'[2] They 'continued in prayer'[3]—'praying always'—*in every season, on every occasion*[4]—'with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.' In the language of the text, they '*unceasingly prayed;*' because their hours of prayer were frequent and regular—because they did not willingly suffer aught else to supersede or interrupt that high communion—because in all their toils and conflicts they sought still to maintain the spirit and habit of devotion, in an ever active, realizing sense of God's nearness to them, and of their dependence on His grace.

Such—amidst whatever weakness of the flesh and disturbance from without—such, I say, was their constant aim; and, according as they approximated to its attainment, in the same degree they 'were strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,'[5] and they *always rejoiced.* Not only does David in one place[6] speak of his 'praying, and crying aloud, evening, and morning, and at noon'—like Daniel in Babylon opening his windows in his chamber toward Jerusalem, and 'kneeling upon his knees three times a day, and praying'[7]—not only does he cry out in another place,[8] 'Seven times a day do I praise Thee'—but in Psalm 86 : 3 he says: 'Unto Thee will I cry all the day.'[9]

As, on the one hand, we read of the wicked, that

[1] Col. 4 : 12 (ἀγωνιζόμενος). [2] 1 Pet. 4 : 7. [3] Col. 4 : 2.
[4] Eph. 6 : 18 (ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ. So also in Luke 21 : 36).
[5] 2 Tim. 4 : 5. [6] Ps. 55 : 17. [7] Dan. 6 : 10.
[8] Ps. 119 : 164. [9] אֵלֶיךָ אֶקְרָא כָּל־הַיּוֹם

'God is not in all his thoughts,'[1] so on the other hand, difficult as it may be for us, my hearers, in this sunken, earthly life of ours, to conceive aright of the state of perfection, we yet cannot doubt the possibility of rational and spiritual creatures, who 'live, and move, and have their being in God,'[2] being every moment of their existence so possessed with a glad consciousness of the glorious fact, that their whole service shall be one continuous act of worship and adoration, and 'whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, they do all to the glory of God.'[3] The living stream, to whatever scenes of solitude or of beauty it may wander, maintains still its connection with its source, and everywhere bears in its bosom the impulse, and freshness, and joy, with which it sprang at first from its native rock.

Nor is it necessary that we exclude prayer itself, as the 'offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will,' from our idea of heaven. For the ordinary representation[4] on that point I find no warrant of reason or of Scripture. On the contrary, I prefer to think of that which brings so much strength and consolation to the soul here on earth, as there reaching its sublimest development and highest power. All doubt, and fear, and misconception being for ever quite removed—the filial confidence and holy boldness of the redeemed now fully answerable to the elevation and

[1] Ps. 10: 4. [2] Acts 17: 28. [3] 1 Cor. 10: 31.

[4] Eadie, on Col. 4: 2: 'Prayer and thanksgiving coexist only on earth. They shall be separated in the other world, for in the region of woe there is only wailing, and in that of glory there is only melody'

security of their standing in the house of their Father —every desire and tendency of the glorified spirit moving in perfect and unfailing accordance with the Divine will—there will, indeed, be no more standing afar off, no more smiting upon the breast, no more tears and groans of a remorseful humiliation, no more painfulness of uncertainty, or sickness of hope deferred. But for the same reasons will there not rather be the swiftest reciprocation of prayer and blessing? What a new and lustrous energy of meaning may then be found in the old promises: 'It shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear'[1]—'If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it;'[2]—as well as in the old assurance of faith: 'This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.' May we not even venture to say, that the prerogative of the Only-Begotten and Well-Beloved will then be shared with all His brethren: 'I knew that Thou hearest me always.'[3]

And here again we are reminded that, as with every other duty, so likewise with that of prayer, the great motive is supplied by the office and work, the teaching and the life, of the Lord Jesus.

He is the 'one Mediator between God and men,'[4] and,

[1] Is. 65: 24. [2] John 14: 14. [3] John 11: 42. [4] 1 Tim. 2: 5.

as such, He 'hath consecrated for us a new and living way, whereby we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.'[1] Assuming that His followers would be a praying people, He taught them how to pray—for what things—in what spirit—in whose name. To overcome their distrust, He appealed to the strong instincts of the parental heart, and then declared the Fatherly benignity of God. For their yet greater encouragement, He assured them again and again beforehand of a favourable issue. And, because human weakness and impatience and carnality are still so apt to fail in this matter, He spake parable upon parable 'to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.'[2]

Then, such being His instructions, what was His example? Surely, if there ever lived a man on earth who could afford to dispense with prayer, it was the Man in whom 'dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily'[3] —the Man that was God's 'fellow,'[4] and lay in His bosom from eternity. How noteworthy is it, brethren, and how instructive, to find that even with Him God dealeth by the same rule as with us! Just as our Lord says to us: 'Ask, and it shall be given you,'[5] so says the Father to Him: 'Ask of me, and I shall give thee.'[6] Accordingly, we altogether miss one main element of human interest in the gospels, when we fail to observe that it was by the very same principles of faith

[1] Heb. 10: 19, 20. [2] Luke 11: 1–13; 18: 1–8. [3] Col. 2: 9.
[4] Zech. 13: 7. [5] Matt. 7: 7. [6] Ps. 2: 8.

and prayer, by which we are required to overcome all enemies, that Christ Himself overcame. 'In the days of His flesh, He offered up prayers and supplications'—and that not merely in fulfilment of a legal righteousness, but with a deep sense of present personal necessity—'with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.'[1] Amid all the labours and agitations of His life, His loving, trusting soul ever watched for opportunities of pouring itself forth in secret to His 'Father which is in secret.'[2] And when such opportunities could not be had by day, or in the haunts of men, He sought them in desert solitudes, and during the still, dark hours of night.

Thus, among the earliest incidents recorded by Mark is this one: 'And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.'[3] About the same time, but, it would appear, on a different occasion, 'He withdrew Himself,' says Luke, 'into the wilderness, and prayed.'[4] Not long after, as we learn from the same Evangelist, 'He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.'[5] And a subsequent occurrence of the same wondrous character is related by both Matthew and Mark.[6] Still later Luke speaks of Him as being 'alone praying;'[7] and as, the very next week, 'going up into a mountain to pray;'

[1] Heb. 5:7. [2] Matt. 6:6. [3] Mark 1:35. [4] Luke 5:16.
[5] Luke 6:12. [6] Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:46. [7] Luke 9:18.

on which occasion it was that, 'as He prayed,'[1] the glory of the Transfiguration shone out for a brief season on the Man of sorrows. Then comes that great utterance[2] of His faith and love, which He addressed to the Father, with eyes lifted up to heaven, in the presence and hearing of the disciples, just before passing into the darkness of His final passion. And, dear hearers, you all remember by what means He prepared Himself for that last trial. 'Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. . . . And He went a little further, and fell on His face, and prayed. . . . He went away again the second time, and prayed. . . . And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time'[3]—yea, 'being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.'[4]

Ah, brethren, how should it affect our hearts, that even at such a time, amidst the very throes of that dire struggle, pity for the weakness of His poor friends, and, it may be, a human longing for human sympathy, brought Him back once and again to their side! And what word of tenderest admonition was it, which, of the many that He had spoken unto them, was now alone repeated by those quivering lips? '*Watch and pray*, that ye enter not into temptation'[5]—as if He

[1] Luke 9: 29. [2] John 17. [3] Matt. 26: 36, 39, 42, 44.
[4] Luke 22: 44.
[5] Matt. 26; 41. Compare Mark 13: 33 and Luke 21: 36.

had said: 'With no other weapons than these am I, in this hour and power of darkness, pressing toward the goal.'

Blessed be God! in His hands they proved equal to the crisis. They brought Him off more than Conqueror. From the shades of death He emerged to 'the right hand of the throne of God,'[1] and there resumed, on the heights of the uncreated glory, the work of intercession begun in the valley of His humiliation. No sooner does He present Himself within the veil as the Lamb that has been slain, than, mindful still of His promise, He 'prays the Father' for 'another Comforter' for those He had left,[2] and onward from that hour He Himself 'ever liveth to make intercession for them,'[3] and to render their prayers likewise acceptable to God. 'And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.'[4]

My dear hearers, after all these mighty preparations on earth and in heaven for the restoration of gracious intercourse between God and us, how many of you, it may be feared, instead of 'praying without ceasing,' never—never pray at all! never in your families! never

[1] Heb. 12 : 2. [2] John 14 : 16.
[3] Heb. 7 : 25. [4] Rev. 8 : 3, 4.

in secret! After what has already been said, need one word be added, to make manifest to yourselves the ingratitude, the recklessness, the madness of a prayerless life? Be sure, that, if you are ever to obtain mercy from the Lord, it is at the throne of grace that you must find it, and that of you too it shall yet be said, as of Saul of Tarsus: 'Behold, he prayeth!'[1]

But, alas! alas! how little faith have any of us in prayer—the omnipotence of prayer! 'Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are,[2] and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.' Of so much avail even then was 'the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man.' And now when at any time, under a dispensation of so much richer grace, the sweet influences of the spiritual firmament descend no more, and our souls languish, and faith totters, and love waxes cold, and hope grows dim, and the songs of salvation cease, and sinners are not converted unto God, but the rousing, warning, beseeching voices of the sanctuary, of the word, and of providence, pass alike ineffectual and unheeded—what is—what must be the explanation of all this, but that prayer is 'restrained before God?'[3] 'We have not, because we ask not. We ask, and re-

[1] Acts 9 : 11.

[2] James 5 : 16, 17 (ὁμοιοπαθὴς ἡμῖν, *like-affected, of like infirmities with us*).

[3] Job 15 : 4.

ceive not, because we ask amiss'[1]—with little or nothing of that urgent, violent, inappeasable importunity, which dares even to say unto God: 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.'[2] Such a spirit not even God can resist, and to it He evermore delights to yield.

[1] James 4 : 3. [2] Gen. 32 : 26.

LECTURE XXVI.

I. Thess. 5 : 18.—'In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.'

Here we have the last of these three great manifestations of the new life in the soul of man: Joy—Prayer—Thanksgiving;—joy sustained and enlarged by prayer, and pouring itself forth in thanksgiving;—continual joy—unceasing prayer—universal thanksgiving. '*In every thing give thanks*'—this being at once the natural expression of holy joy, and a necessary accompaniment of acceptable prayer.

The mutual affinity of all three is beautifully represented in Phil. 4 : 4–6 : 'Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.' And this connection in particular of thanksgiving with prayer is in like manner assumed by the Apostle, when he says to the Colossians (4 : 2): 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with

thanksgiving'—a combination, the reasonableness of which is apparent. How can we expect—how shall we dare to ask—ever fresh favours from God, if those already received awaken no feeling of gratitude, and draw forth no acknowledgment?

Such a dumb, stolid disregard of the Giver of all good is, indeed, the spirit of the world, even while the world is upheld by Him, and replenished with his bounty. In all places to which the guilty nations were scattered, the glory of the Creator shone; nor did He leave Himself without abundant, daily witness to the riches of His providential 'goodness and forbearance and longsuffering.'[1] Yet in that terrible indictment, recorded by the Spirit of truth in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, one of the darkest items is just this, that 'when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful.'[2] And still more strange and sad is it to find, that in the no less terrible portraiture, drawn by our Apostle in the third chapter of his Second Epistle to Timothy, of the perilous times of Christendom's last days—Christendom, the vineyard of the Lord, and for so many ages the scene of His mightiest and most gracious actings—the same baleful feature reappears. 'Men,' says Paul, 'shall be . . . unthankful.'

Now there are very few sins, which, when committed by men against one another, so readily and deeply offend our moral sense. 'There is no duty,' says the

[1] Rom. 2:4. [2] Rom. 1:21.

heathen moralist formerly cited, 'more indispensable than to requite a kindness. . . . He who is unmindful of a benefit is detested by all. . . . In an ungrateful temper there is every thing that is evil.'[1] The offense, of course, is great, in proportion to the largeness and variety and disinterestedness of the favours received. And for this reason it is greatest of all in the case of 'a thankless child.'[2]

Think, then, what must be the guilt of man's ingratitude—the ingratitude especially of His own children—to 'the Father of lights,' from whom cometh down 'every good gift and every perfect gift.'[3] Scripture affords us many illustrations :—

'Upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory : and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.'[4]

When good king Hezekiah was sick to the death, he prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. The prayer was heard, and graciously answered, and the answer itself confirmed by a miraculous sign from heaven. But what

[1] 'Nullum enim officium referenda gratia magis necessarium est. Omnes enim immemorem beneficii oderunt. . . . in quo vitio nihil mali non inest.' Cicero, *De Off.* I. 15. II. 18. *Ad Att.* viii. 4.

[2] 'How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child.' Shakespeare, *King Lear.*

[3] James 1 : 17. [4] Acts 12 : 21–23.

followed? 'Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.'[1]

By the mouth of Hosea (2 : 8) God complains of His people, that, without any recognition of the hand from which they received all their blessings, they spent them on their own lusts, or in honour of His base rivals. They 'did not know that I gave them corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied their silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.'

And there is a yet tenderer tone, as of outraged parental love, in that majestic proclamation of His wrongs by Isaiah (1 : 2): 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.'

Be it remembered that the manifestation of His own glory must needs be God's highest end in all His works of creation and providence. It is so in His greatest work of saving a lost world by Jesus Christ, and in the organization of the Church. 'Every one that is called by my name—I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him. . . . This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.'[2] They are to do it by reflecting their Maker's image—by obeying His will in all things—

[1] 2 Chron. 32 : 24, 25; Is. 38 : 3. [2] Is. 43 : 7, 21.

and also by the direct, open, joyful celebration of His name.

For in this work of thanksgiving the creature's happiness is concerned, as well as the Divine glory. To a generous nature, as there is nothing more becoming, so there are few things more truly delightful, than the feeling and manifestation of gratitude to a kind and magnanimous benefactor. This element, accordingly, enters very largely into 'the joy of God's salvation.'[1] And it is just what might be expected, that, as often as the door is opened into the upper sanctuary, there is heard thence, in ceaseless and unwearying reiteration, 'the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him. Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever, Amen.'[2] Thus, heaven itself is one eternal eucharist; and that fact alone suffices to show that its inhabitants are a happy people. 'Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising Thee;'[3] blessed, that is, as the objects of the love of God; and blessed in the very utterance of their thankful joy.

But observe, that this description applies to believers also in the present state. '*In every thing give thanks*,

[1] Ps. 51: 12. [2] Rev. 19: 6, 7; 7: 12. [3] Ps. 84: 4.

cries Paul to his fellow-sufferers ; not, as some[1] interpret, *at all times;* still less, *in all cases of good fortune ;*[2] but '*in every thing*,' under all circumstances—in prosperity, in adversity ; in riches, in poverty ; in health, in sickness ; yea, in 'tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword'[3]—'*in every thing give thanks.*' Cherish now the temper, and here rehearse the songs, of future glory. 'Bless the Lord at all times : let His praise continually be in your mouths.'[4] Such was the spirit of the 'man after God's own heart ;' and such too the spirit of God's 'servant Job'—the 'perfect and upright man.' Stripped of all things, his property and his children—it was then that 'Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither : the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.'[5] Or think of the experience of our own Apostle. In 'the inner prison' of Philippi—bleeding from 'many stripes'—'their feet fast in the stocks'—'at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God : and the prisoners heard them.'[6]

It was not, therefore, any 'great swelling word of vanity'[7] that Paul used, when in one of his Epistles he

[1] Chrysostom, Wakefield, Flatt. But see 2 Cor. 9 : 8, where ἐν παντί is joined with πάντοτε.

[2] Estius : '*In omnibus*, intellige Bonis.'

[3] Rom. 8 : 35. [4] Ps. 34 : 1. [5] Job 1 : 8, 20, 21.

[6] Acts 16 : 23–25. [7] 2 Pet. 2 : 18.

exclaims: 'Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ.'[1] Nothing, in truth, can be more fitting—nothing more natural—than that the soldiers of the cross, finding thus safety in every peril, healing in every wound, strength in all their weakness, victory in all their conflicts, should on each successive field stand leaning on their shields, and, lifting their eyes to heaven, shout forth their glad *Te Deum* to Him, in whose name—by whose strength—for whose glory they conquer. In the presence and embrace of death itself, these warriors still fasten their gaze on the banner of God's love streaming over them, and still, with their last breath, they sing: 'Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'[2]

You perceive that the very same considerations, that were adduced to justify the exhortation of the sixteenth verse, '*Always rejoice*,' are equally available in the present instance. I shall, therefore, only remark here generally, that, in order to the cheerful, spontaneous observance of this apostolic precept, there is required,

1. In the first place, a habitual contemplation of the infinite grandeur and excellence of the Divine nature. To know God is not only 'life eternal;'[3] it is quietness and assurance also in the midst of this life's perplexities and changes. It extinguishes all thoughts of murmuring at the allotments of providence, and enables the

[1] 2 Cor. 2: 14. [2] 1 Cor. 15: 57. [3] John 17: 3.

soul, when most benighted and burdened and overwhelmed, to stay itself upon 'the everlasting arms.'[1]

2. This, however, implies, secondly, the existence in the soul of a good hope through grace—an abiding faith that this glorious Being is our own Redeemer and Friend—a continual recognition of Him, and a childlike trust in Him, as the almighty, gracious Orderer and Disposer of all events that now befall us, whether 'joyous' or 'grievous.'[2]

3. And, lastly, our gratitude will be deepened, and our giving of thanks enabled with less difficulty to reach the apostolic standard, if we bear ever in mind and upon our hearts our utter unworthiness of 'the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which God shows unto His servants.'[3] Then, indeed, we number it among 'the Lord's mercies, that we are not consumed.'[4] And starting thence—from the mouth of the pit from which only His hand rescued us—and glancing along the path of life—as we mark how, notwithstanding all our forgetfulness and waywardness and multiplied offenses, every single hour comes laden with fresh memorials of love, in the maintenance of our lot, in the increase of our joys, and in the alleviation of our woes, from Him 'who forgiveth all our iniquities; who healeth all our diseases; who redeemeth our life from destruction;

[1] Deut. 33 : 27.
[2] Heb. 12 : 11.
[3] Gen. 32 : 10.
[4] Lam. 3 : 22.

who crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth our mouth with good things; so that our youth is renewed like the eagle's'[1]—we call upon our souls and all that is within us to bless the Lord's holy name, and we summon the universe to swell His praise. 'Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.'[2] After our best efforts, we can but take our station at last at the foot of the cross, and, beholding there the foundation and the crown of all other blessings—the awful evidence at once of our guilt and misery and of God's marvellous grace—say with the full, warm, but ah! how inadequate, consent of every faculty of our minds and every emotion of our hearts: 'Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!'[3] No, nor will the Church, in passing into glory, lose her humility. Tears shall no more bedim her brightness; but the unfailing memory of her sins, and of her Lord's shame, shall survive to enhance the raptures, and animate the songs, of eternity. 'Falling down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and worshipping Him that liveth for ever and ever, she casts her crown before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.'[4]

[1] Ps. 103. [2] Ps. 40: 5. [3] 2 Cor. 9: 15. [4] Rev. 4: 10, 11.

But let me hasten to ask your attention to the one ground of thanksgiving, that is here assigned by the Apostle: '*for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*'

Some,[1] indeed, would extend the reference to the preceding verse; and others[2] include in it all the three duties of continual joy, unceasing prayer, and universal thanksgiving. Either of these views is certainly possible, but neither of them perhaps so natural as that, which restricts what is here said to the giving of thanks in every thing.

And, even so understood, what a gracious announcement it is! '*In every thing give thanks: for this is God's will*[3] *in Christ Jesus concerning you*'—not an arbitrary demand for an impossible state of the affections towards Himself, but a most beautiful and consolatory discovery of the largeness of His love, and of the blessed ends for which He has redeemed us. When we are required 'in every thing to give thanks, this being God's will concerning us,' what is this but an earnest, cordial way of assuring us that '*in every thing*'—in every dispensation of His providence—in every cross, and burden, and cloud—God encloses some precious, though for a time, it may be, hidden pledge of love? His will is, that '*in every thing*' we shall find material for gratitude and praise.

And then, brethren, what condescension were it on His part so much as to consent or listen to any praises

[1] Grotius, Schott. [2] Corn. a Lapide, Alford. [3] θέλημα Θεοῦ.

of ours, or to accept a lamb out of our fold! But here we are told that this is His will concerning us—that He invites us to come before Him with the 'sacrifices of joy,'[1] and will receive them from our hands as an honour done to His name! 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me'[2]—is a declaration of God's own word.

Nor is even that all. We shall not err in asserting, that the Church is constituted the great organ of God's praise in the universe. The hymn, that ascends from all creatures to the throne, was interrupted in the beginning by sin. But now in the Church, and through her, it bursts forth anew in a far loftier and holier strain. Her children are the Royal Priesthood to God and the Lamb—eternally associated with the Great High Priest Himself, for the glorification of God's infinite majesty, and for the blessing of creation to its uttermost bounds.

For you will observe finally, that all this is secured to us '*in Christ Jesus.*' Only in Him is this 'will of God concerning us' revealed and made effectual. Through Him alone does the Divine benevolence reach our ruined race, and that 'in every thing'—not only in atoning blood, and the renewing Spirit, but in all the comforts, deliverances, and joys of our daily life. And through the same medium must we present all our returns of gratitude—'singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things

[1] Ps. 27 : 6. [2] Ps. 50 : 23.

unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'[1] And again says Paul: 'Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.'[2] And yet once more: 'By Him therefore'—Him, the great Leader in these songs of salvation, in this harmony of all worlds—'By Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our life, giving thanks to His name.'[3]

You see, then, my hearers, that this precept also can be acceptably fulfilled only by such as 'have the mind of Christ.'[4] A man that knows not Christ—whose sins are unforgiven, and his enmity still unsubdued, and on whose troubled heart no peace of God has yet descended—cannot thus give thanks in every thing—cannot thus give thanks in any thing. Prosperity will prove but a snare, to withdraw him farther and farther from 'the Fountain of living waters.'[5] Or, should adversities assail him, he is never sure that these are not the first kindlings of wrath unquenchable.

If, therefore, any soul in this assembly, as it ponders the innumerable gifts of God, is moved to inquire: 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?' my answer is: First of all, see that you refuse not—neglect not—the greatest of those gifts. 'Take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.'[6] 'First give your own selves to the Lord.'[7]

[1] Eph. 5 : 19, 20. [2] Col. 3 : 17. [3] Heb. 13 : 15. [4] 1 Cor. 2 : 16.
[5] Jerem. 2 : 13. [6] Ps. 116 : 12, 13. [7] 2 Cor. 8 : 5.

'Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.'[1] 'This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs'[2]—better than 'thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil'[3]—better than all other costliest gifts of 'gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.'[4] And, when once that offering has been accepted on the altar of His grace, He will 'put a new song in your mouth, even praise unto our God.'[5] Nothing will then be grudged as too precious, whereby you can manifest your gratitude, and advance His glory. Quickened by the fresh motives of the renewed nature, you will 'do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God.'[6] And especially when He, who, 'though He was rich, yet for your sakes became poor,' and bought you with His blood, points you from His seat on high to a perishing world, and to the wants and sorrows of His own brethren around you, you too, like the disciples of Macedonia, 'to your power, yea, and beyond your power will be willing of yourselves.'[7] Says the writer to the Hebrews, toward the very close of that Epistle in which so much is written concerning priesthood and altars and ritual: 'But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.'[8] So great and so generous is His own philanthropy, that in no way can His children more readily commend themselves to His heart, than by thus making others partakers of their joy.

[1] Rom. 12 : 1. [2] Ps. 69 : 31. [3] Mic. 6 : 7. [4] Matt. 2 : 11.
[5] Ps. 40 : 3. [6] Mic. 6 : 8. [7] 2 Cor. 8 : 3, 9. [8] Heb. 13 : 16.

LECTURE XXVII.

I. THESS. 5: 19–22.—'Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.'

THESE four verses will be found to bear all on one point, and we shall therefore consider them together. But we are to begin by observing, that the warning of the nineteenth verse might, with no less propriety, be taken in connection with the preceding exhortations. Thus, to go no farther back than the last three of these, there is no doubt that Christian joy and prayer and thanksgiving depend on the influences of the Holy Spirit; or, on the other hand, that, by restraining and repressing these emotions and exercises of the soul toward God, we incur the guilt and danger, from which the Apostle would save us, of quenching the Spirit. A few words, then, of general statement, will not here be out of place.

In the beginning, the Spirit of God brooded over the face of chaos, and the glorious results that followed are

sometimes, accordingly, ascribed to His immediate agency. And, as in creating, so in upholding and governing the universe, God worketh through His Spirit. To which Divine economy in the natural world there is thought to be reference, more or less direct and explicit, in such passages as these :—'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made ; and all the host of them by the breath'—or Spirit—'of His mouth.' 'By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens.' 'Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created : and Thou renewest the face of the earth.'[1]

Now, Scripture every where teaches, that in the sphere of redemption there is a corresponding presence and energy of this adorable Person. Whatever men have learned in any age of the world of the nature and purposes of the Godhead, they have learned from His inspiration ; and all the power, even of the truth as it is in Jesus, to enlighten—comfort—sanctify—and save, is imparted to it by His effectual operation on the heart. In the spiritual, as in the natural world, He is, to use our Lord's figure, 'the finger of God.'[2]

But while there exists this analogy between the Spirit's workings in these various departments, there is also a very marked difference, according to the different nature of that on which He works ;—matter being absolutely passive, unconscious, and unresisting, in His creative, moulding hand ; while man, even in his lost

[1] Ps. 33 : 6 ; Job 26 : 13 ; Ps. 104 : 30.
[2] Luke 11 : 18, compared with Matt. 12 : 28.

and ruined state, retains without abatement his original accountability as a rational and moral agent.

In the regeneration of the soul, therefore, and subsequent sanctification of the sinner, there is no violence done to his spiritual being, any more than when the frozen earth and ice-bound waters yield to the breath of spring. On the contrary, each mental faculty and susceptibility is addressed through appropriate motives and allurements. Even 'in the day of God's power,' the objects of His grace are not bound as with the cords of a physical compulsion, and 'carried whither they would not.' They are 'drawn with cords of a man, with bands of love,' and are found a 'willing people.'[1] The will itself is quickened, sanctified, persuaded, not coerced; and the prayer of every truly awakened soul is: 'Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned. . . . Draw me, we will run after Thee.'[2]

Nor is the sin to which the text points, of quenching the Spirit, an imaginary one. Alas, my hearers, it is this day the great sin of Christendom. God's Spirit 'strives with man,'[3] and man fatally 'resists.'[4] The Holy One comes forth to cheer and guide us through the wilderness; and the lost and weary wanderers 'rebel' against His authority, and, in the face of all His compassionate solicitations, they 'vex' Him till even His patience is exhausted, and His forbearance over-

[1] Ps. 110:3; John 21:18; Hos. 11:4.
[2] Jerem. 31:18; Cant. 1:4. [3] Gen. 6:3. [4] Acts 7:51.

come. 'Therefore He is turned to be their enemy, and He fights against them,'[1] and only their scattered carcases remain to attest at once the greatness of their obduracy, and His righteous indignation.

Against this so dreadful issue of God's most merciful dispensations, His professing people are here solemnly warned under the new covenant, as they formerly were under the old. There is, therefore, such a thing still as 'doing despite unto'—*insulting*[2]—'the Spirit of grace;'—such a thing as the lamp 'going out'[3] for lack of oil;—such a thing as 'quenching the smoking flax,'[4] ere ever it kindle into flame. Nay, may not this very thing be true of some that I now address? Have there not been seasons when each one of those hopeful signs enumerated in the sixth chapter of Hebrews seemed to be fully realized in your experience? You were 'once enlightened'—you 'tasted of the heavenly gift'—you were 'made partakers of the Holy Ghost'—you 'tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.' And how is it with you now? All these signs, it may be, have vanished 'as a morning cloud, and as the early dew.'[5] Your whole spiritual region is parched—barren—dead. No more vivid glimpses now of Divine things, and no relish for them;—no longer any solemn sense of eternal realities;—no wondering contemplation now of the glory of Christ;—no swellings of heart now

[1] Is. 63: 10. [2] Heb. 10: 29 (*ἐνυβρίσας*).
[3] Matt. 25: 8 (*σβέννυνται*—same word as here).
[4] Is. 42: 3. [5] Hos. 6: 4.

even in the presence of His cross! 'Seeing, ye see not; and hearing, ye hear not; neither do ye understand.' And whence comes this sad change? Is it that God formerly tantalized you with vain hopes, which He intended should never be fulfilled? Or is it, dear hearers, that *you* have quenched the Spirit? Are you —any of you—to be reckoned with those whom Calvin on this verse describes as 'having been once enlightened; but rejecting so precious a gift of God, or shutting their eyes, and letting themselves be hurried off so into the world's vanity—we perceive,' says he, 'that they are struck with a fearful blindness, that they may be to others for an example.'[1]

But, indeed, this admonition is for us all. In the present state of warfare and imperfection, there is no child of God of whom it may not be said with truth, that 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that he cannot do the things that he would.'[2] Nay, in the case of genuine believers, more than in any other, every sin 'grieves'—of itself tends to grieve away —'the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption.'[3]

So much for the general import and bearing of these words: '*Quench not the Spirit.*'

[1] 'Valde utilis admonitio: nam eos qui semel illuminati fuerant, ubi respuunt tam pretiosum Dei donum, vel clausis oculis se abripi sinunt in mundi vanitatem, horrenda cœcitate percuti cernimus, ut sint aliis in exemplum.' [2] Gal. 5: 17. [3] Eph. 4: 30.

But now observe that they have here a special relation to the particular form of the Spirit's operation, mentioned in the next verse: '*Despise not prophesyings.*'

This was one of Christ's ascension gifts to the Church —the second of the four great ministries ordained by Him 'for the perfecting of the saints.'[1] As the 'body' of Christ, 'the fulness of Him that filleth all in all,'[2] the whole Church partakes of His prophetical, as well as of His priestly and kingly prerogative. Her function in it is to declare the mind and purposes of God—to reveal God Himself to 'the world, and to angels, and to men.'[3] But this is not inconsistent with the special endowment of some of her members for her own greater security, consolation, and guidance.

You must not, however, suppose that the prophesying here referred to was simply or mainly a foretelling of future events. It might, and often did,[4] include that; but it included much more. It was rather, in general, the inspired utterance, sometimes in psalms and hymns, of spiritual things—a speaking in the power of the Holy Ghost, whether or not in the form of Scriptural exposition, for the instruction and comfort of the Church. 'He that prophesieth,' says Paul, 'speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.'[5] And, on the ground of the superior usefulness of this gift, he encouraged the Corinthians to covet it even

[1] Eph. 4 : 11, 12; 1 Cor. 12 : 28. [2] Eph. 1 : 23. [3] 1 Cor. 4 : 9.
[4] Acts 11 : 27, 28 ; 21 : 9-11 ; &c. [5] 1 Cor. 14 : 3.

more earnestly than other gifts of a more striking, showy character.[1]

It is true that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the office of the prophet, is now recognized by the churches of Christ. For the most part, they seem to have no desire for, no thought of, either. Yet we know that in the apostolic Church this pentecostal decoration attained the most luxuriant development.[2] It became, so to speak, her cheerful household lamp, lit by the Spirit's own hand, and by Him kept ever burning, as she sat alone amidst the darkness of this world. It was the cloudy, fiery pillar of the Lord's presence, out of which He called His servants by their names, and directed all their movements.

How then, you may well ask, was it possible for any that were thus highly favoured to *'despise prophesyings?'*

In the first place, as has already been hinted, there was probably less in the ordinary exercise of this gift to astonish, or gratify a mere wondering curiosity, than in the gifts of healing, for instance, or of speaking with tongues. And secondly, whenever Satan finds that he can neither prevent nor extinguish any operation of God, his next aim is to caricature, and, if possible, to defile it. As there were 'false Christs'[3] in those days, and 'false apostles,'[4] so likewise 'many false prophets were

[1] 1 Cor. 12 : 31 ; 14 : 1, 4, 5, 39. [2] See, in addition to passages already cited, Acts 13 : 1, 2 ; 15 : 32 ; 19 : 6 ; 20 : 23 ; Rom. 12 : 6 ; 1 Cor. 14 : 24–26, 29–32 ; 1 Tim. 1 : 18 ; 4 : 1, 14.
[3] Matt. 24 : 24. [4] 2 Cor. 11 : 13 ; Rev. 2 : 2.

gone out into the world,'[1] retailing the devil's lies in the Lord's name. And not only so, but the true prophets themselves might sometimes mistake their own private feelings, or the suggestions of their own minds, for immediate promptings of the Holy Spirit. For the Thessalonians, in particular, these dangers were greatly aggravated by the tendency, that we formerly observed among them, to a kind of enthusiastic restlessness and religious dissipation, in view of the Lord's speedy coming.[2]

From these various sources, then, of imposture and self-deception, there might possibly arise, as in the Corinthian church there did arise, scenes of disorder and manifold delusions.[3] And these again, combined with the consideration first-mentioned—the comparative unimpressiveness of the prophetical function itself—would be but too apt to bring it into discredit, if not into contempt.

Against this peril, therefore, of '*quenching the Spirit*' —putting out, as it were, the candle of the Lord in the Lord's dwelling—by '*despising prophesyings*,' Paul would yet farther fortify his brethren by the counsels of apostolic wisdom and prudence:—'*Prove all things*' (or, according to the reading which many prefer: *But*[4] *prove all things*); '*hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.*'

'*Prove all things*'—all things especially that claim a Divine origin and authority. Do not, therefore, at

[1] 1 John 4 : 1. [2] See p. 239. [3] See 2 Thess. 2 : 2. [4] πάντα δε.

once either reject or receive in a mass whatever comes to you as an utterance of the Holy Ghost; but prove it —try it—put every thing to the test. And what is the test?—surely a most vital question.

The false prophets of our own time, it will be found, make a great merit of submitting, with an ostentatious reverence, all their oracles, whencesoever derived, to the decision of human reason. Nor can it be denied, that the judge is quite good enough for the cause. But shall we, therefore, dare to cite before such a tribunal—so weak, so limited, so prejudiced, so impure—the Infinite Spirit of the incomprehensible and only wise and thrice holy God? No, my hearers; that is not the test. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them.'[1] And yet says Paul: '*Prove all things.*' And says John: 'Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.'[2]

Observe, then, that this exhortation is addressed, not to the natural man, but to the spiritual, who 'judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man'[3]—to such as know the voice of the Divine Shepherd, 'and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.'[4] In other words, it is addressed to the Church of God, which 'has an unction from the Holy One, and knows all things.'[5] Scripture itself insists everywhere on this spiritual dis-

[1] 1 Cor. 2:14. [2] 1 John 4:1. [3] 1 Cor. 2:15.
[4] John 10:4, 5. [5] 1 John 2:20.

cernment, and on a right state of the heart and life toward God, as an indispensable condition of all right and safe judging of the things of God. 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.'[1] 'Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.'[2] 'What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.'[3] 'Walk as children of light . . . proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.'[4]

Nor yet is the believer entirely dependent, in this matter, on his own spiritual illumination. His is not the temper of a presumptuous, fanatical reliance on the inner light. If he is indebted to God's regenerating grace for 'the seeing eye,'[5] as little does he forget that 'the sun' of truth, which is so 'pleasant a thing' for the purged eye to behold,[6] shines in the written revelation. Gladly he consents to that demand of Christ's apostle: 'If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant'—so as either to question my author-

[1] John 7 : 17. [2] Rom. 12 : 2. [3] 1 Cor. 2 : 11, 12.
[4] Eph. 5 : 8, 10. [5] Prov. 20 : 12. [6] Eccl. 11 : 7.

ity, or claim a higher authority for himself—'let him be ignorant'[1]—with such a man I will hold no further argument. And just so another apostle: 'We are of God; he that knoweth God, heareth us; and he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.'[2] Nay, if Paul himself, or an angel from heaven, come preaching 'any other gospel' than what is here announced, the Church plants her foot on this eternal rock, and smites him with a curse.[3] When you, therefore, dear brethren, are beset by any of the miserable gospels that now vaunt themselves on every hand, remember, I beseech you, the energetic, conclusive protest of the great Prophet of the ancient Church: 'And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.'[4] Yes, emulate the fame of the noble Bereans, who, even under an apostolic ministry, 'searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.'[5]

And here distinct mention ought to be made of one form of the application of this scriptural test. '*Prove all things*'—and that especially in their relation to the glory of Jesus Christ. Do they, as all Scripture does, maintain and illustrate the peerless dignity of that 'name

[1] 1 Cor. 14 : 37, 38. [2] 1 John 4 : 6. [3] Gal. 1 : 8, 9.
[4] Is. 8 : 19, 20. [5] Acts 17 : 11.

which is above every name,'[1] as the only Lord of man's conscience—the only Saviour of the world? Or do they, under whatever flimsy disguise of cold and heartless, though it may be most rhetorical, compliment, degrade Him into the rank of this world's heroes and sages—obscuring at once the blood of His cross, and the brightness of His throne? 'Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.'[2] 'Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.'[3] Lying lips cannot—dare not—utter the Shibboleth of heaven. That Jesus Christ was very man and very God—that in Jesus Christ 'God was manifest in the flesh'[4]—this is the grand, central truth of revelation; the source and the test of every other.

Still another test was furnished by our Lord Himself in those words: 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits'[5]—by the influence, that is, of their teachings on the moral and spiritual life of themselves and their followers. The cloak of innocence may be ever so dexterously worn for a time. The evil nature beneath is sure to betray itself in the end. As Christ's doctrine 'is according to godli-

[1] Phil. 2: 9. [2] 1 John 4: 2, 3. [3] 1 Cor. 12: 2.
[4] 1 Tim. 2: 16. [5] Matt. 7: 15, 16.

ness,'[1] and His people are sanctified through God's word of truth,[2] so does religious error, specious as it commonly is in its beginnings, tend with a fatal uniformity to moral deterioration and corruption.

With all these provisions and securities, therefore, of Divine grace, inward and outward, and with the throne of grace ever open to us, Christians need not shrink from the task of '*proving all things*,' that claim their assent and obedience as messages from God. The primitive believers, indeed, had an additional safeguard in that other supernatural gift of 'discerning of spirits,' to which Paul refers more than once in First Corinthians (12 : 10 ; 14 : 29), and of the exercise of which by the Apostles themselves we seem to have repeated instances in the book of Acts (5 : 3, 9 ; 8 : 21, 23 ; 13 : 9, 10). But, in place of that, we have the completed canon of Scripture, and the history of the Church for eighteen centuries. Shall we not, then, be more inexcusable than they, if, 'being led away with the error of the wicked, we fall from our own steadfastness?'[3]

Having thus '*proved all things, hold fast*,' continues the Apostle, '*that which is good*.' It is supposed by some[4] that, while the first member of this 21st verse is closely connected in sense with v. 20, the second belongs in like manner to v. 22, and forms with it in an altogether new sentence an exhortation to universal

[1] 1 Tim. 6 : 3. [2] John 17 : 17. [3] 2 Peter 3 : 17.
[4] Peile, Alford.

holiness. The common arrangement and interpretation, however, are to be preferred, and for this among other[1] reasons, that what the Apostle would here caution his brethren against, in regard to prophetic utterances, is not, as in 1 John 4 : 1, an indiscriminating credulity, but a general sceptical indifference; and, viewed in this light, the injunctions: '*Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things,*' sound incomplete, without some such positive supplement as: '*Hold fast that which is good.*' I consider the whole to be equivalent to this: Keep your minds open to whatever new light God may send you through the ministries of the Church. But be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.[2] Have your senses exercised to discern both good and evil.[3] Prove all things, and that which is good—*fair, comely*[4]—whether old or new, hold fast. As our Apostle has it elsewhere: 'Cleave to that which is good.'[5]

And to this there is here appended, finally, an earnest dissuasive in the most general terms from the opposite: '*Abstain from all appearance of evil;*' or rather, *from every form of evil,*[6] doctrinal or practical, of the

[1] The two neuter forms—the indefinite *πάντα* in the one case, and the specific *τὸ κάλον* in the other—as well as the two antithetical verbs, *δοκιμάζετε—κατέχετε*, seem to imply a common reference of the two clauses, and that not exclusively to the *προφητείας*.

[2] Heb. 13 : 9. [3] Heb. 5 : 14. [4] *καλόν*. [5] Rom. 12 : 9.

[6] Many take *πονηροῦ* as an adjective in agreement with *εἴδους*, the reason urged for this construction by Bengel, Middleton, Tittmann and Schott, being the omission of the article before *πονηροῦ*. But the article is necessary only in case *πονηροῦ*, like *τὸ κάλον* of the previous

spirit or of the flesh. The original word[1] does not mean the mere semblance of any thing without the reality. Nor would the avoidance of whatever merely seems to be evil be the most suitable counterpart to holding fast whatever is truly and essentially good. Such, however, is evidently the opposition intended, as in the passage to which reference has just been made: 'Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.'[2]

1. I think, brethren, you will agree with me in saying, that these precepts of our Apostle are a noble illustration of the free, generous, inquiring, yet at the same time cautious and conservative, spirit of faith. The temper, to which it forms the soul, is equally remote from a deathlike rigidity on the one hand, and, on the other, from the fickleness and inconstancy of a giddy mind.

2. Then, what great reason have we all to cry continually unto God, in the deep consciousness of our sins and our necessities: 'Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit.'[3]

3. And once more, let no fancy, or pretense, or re-

verse, be understood as a continued reference to the *πάντα* of that verse (and so, indeed De Wette understands it); not, if it be here used as a general abstract term.

[1] *εἶδος*. [2] Rom. 12: 9. [3] Ps. 51: 11, 12.

ality even, of spiritual illumination tempt any man to despise, or neglect, the written word, or the established ordinances of the Church. Rather let him the more highly prize, and diligently avail himself of, these, as the appointed means of his continual advance in knowledge and grace.

4. Nor must I forbear to add in the last place, that the Church's present danger, amidst all thickening snares and delusions, arises less from the absence of the Spirit's miraculous gifts, than from the very scanty and superficial acquaintance of her children with Holy Scripture—the fading away of the old feelings of hearty love for the study of it, and profound reverence for its decisions—and, in particular, from the prevailing and—is it too much to say?—contemptuous disregard of the prophetic word of God. To that word, dear brethren, which 'came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' ye would do well to 'take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts.'[1]

[1] 2 Pet. 1: 19, 21.

LECTURE XXVIII.

I. Thess. 5 : 23–28.—'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful *is* He that calleth you, who also will do *it*. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss. I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.'

The comprehensive prayer of the 23d verse is very similar to that which met us at the close of the third chapter, and which was there considered at length. Its connection, also, with what precedes, is precisely the same. Here, as there, the recurrence to the Divine grace is introduced by way of a suggested contrast with human efforts or ministerial exhortations. 'Such are my counsels, and such is your duty. *But*[1] after all that I can say, or you can do, remember still that your present safety and your final salvation depend on God. Into His presence, therefore, let me once more conduct you before parting, and commend you to His ever-present and almighty care—*But may the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your whole spirit*

[1] δέ. See p. 192.

and soul and body be kept[1] *blameless unto the coming*'—literally, *in*[2] or *at the coming;* that is, may you be kept so as to be found blameless at the coming—'*of our Lord Jesus Christ.*'

What Paul prays for is the sanctification of his brethren—their absolute and entire sanctification—a sanctification perfect in its degree, and in that degree extending to every part of their nature. For the sake, indeed, of giving prominence to these ideas of completeness and universality he selects words of rare occurrence and studied emphasis.[3] The apostle's heart is set, not, as we had occasion formerly to remark,[4] on any partial, fragmentary, fleeting reformation, such as this world's philanthropy is so apt to spend itself upon —not on the mere disguising, or modification, or amelioration of existing evil; but on its final and utter extirpation; and that from all regions of man's compound being—his '*spirit and soul and body;*' the trinity, as it has been called, of humanity.

The more common and popular division is into soul and body only. Sometimes, however, a distinction is made between the higher and lower faculties aud attributes of the soul itself—those in which we resemble the angelic intelligences, and those in which even the irra-

[1] The verb (τηρέω) is that of which our Lord makes repeated use in His own prayer for His disciples (John 17 : 11, 12, 15). [2] ἐν.

[3] ὁλοτελεῖς—ὁλόκληρον. The former is found nowhere else in the New Testament; the latter only in James 1 : 4. [4] See p. 212, &c.

tional creatures resemble man;—and then, while the term which we render *soul* is used specially to designate the latter, the term *spirit* is appropriated to the former.[1]

Now the process of sanctification leaves no part of man unvisited and unblessed by its cleansing, elevating, transforming power. The regeneration reaches as far as the curse, and will be perfected only when in '*spirit and soul and body*' we stand 'holy and unblameable and unreproveable'[2] in the sight of God—thoroughly 'conformed to the image of His Son;'[3] and the Son Himself shall look on His glorified Bride, and say: 'Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.'[4]

This blessed consummation we are taught to expect, not during the life that now is, nor at death, nor at any time during the present dispensation, but only '*at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*' Thither, as to a sea of glory, all the streams of providence and grace evermore converge; and to the same bright terminus, therefore, the Apostle's prayers for the churches tend with scarcely less constancy.

He knew, moreover, that the will of God was the sanctification of His people[5]—their '*blameless*' holiness; and this knowledge it was that 'made him confident of this very thing, that He which had begun a good work

[1] Compare 1 Cor. 15 : 44; where the body is distinguished as ψυχικόν and πνευματικόν according as the ψυχή or the πνεῦμα predominates. A similar distinction, though variously defined, is familiar to the schools of philosophy, ancient and modern.

[2] Col. 1 : 22. [3] Rom. 8 : 29. [4] Eccl. 4 : 7. [5] Ch. 4 : 3.

in' the Thessalonians 'would perform it until the day of Christ,'[1] and gave the energy of assurance to his prayers, that '*God Himself*' would 'perfect that which concerned'[2] them; '*God Himself*,' says Dr. John Owen;[3] '. . . If He doth it not, none other can do it. . . . He doth it of Himself, from His own grace; by Himself, or His own power; for Himself, or his own glory.'

To the production of so great a result there is required not only the sanctifying grace of God, but also His '*preserving*' care. He must guard His own work in the hearts of His children—'keeping through His own name'[4]—by His own power[5]—the heirs of salvation. And hence the present safety of the Church, in the midst of all her own weaknesses and corruptions, and of all the snares and temptations and conflicts, through which she passes into the kingdom. God 'keeps her from the evil;'[6]—'keeps her from falling,' that He may at last 'present her faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy'[7]—and, as she presses onward and upward toward the New Jerusalem, the City of God, He puts into her mouth the song that Israel sang, as the tribes gathered from their remotest borders, and 'looked upon Zion, the city of their solemnities,'[8] resting in solemn beauty on the heights of Judah[9]: 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my

[1] Phil. 1: 6. [2] Ps. 138: 8.
[3] *Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit*, iv. 1. [4] John 17: 11.
[5] 1 Pet. 1: 5. [6] John 17: 15; 2 Thess. 3: 3. [7] Jude 24.
[8] Is. 33: 20. [9] Ps. 121.

help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night: the Lord shall keep[1] thee from all evil: He shall keep[1] thy soul. The Lord shall keep[1] thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.'

Observe next that this whole work of sanctification and preservation belongs to God as '*the God of peace.*'

If this most blessed and favourite[2] designation of the Christian's God here refer to the peace which he establishes between Himself and us, we are then reminded that the peace, not of pardon and justification—that is already secured to us through faith in the great Sin-Bearer—but of a perfect mutual complacency between God and man, depends on man's perfect assimilation to the Divine character; and not only so, but that the gracious influence, whereby that assimilation is effected, flows to us through the Mediator from God, reconciling and reconciled.

Or if the peace intended be the domestic peace of the household of faith,[3] as our Apostle elsewhere speaks of God as a God 'not of confusion, but of peace, as in all

[1] שָׁמַר throughout. [2] Rom. 15:33; Heb. 13:20.

[3] Calvin suggests that there may possibly be an allusion to vs. 13, 14.

churches of the saints,'[1] we are then taught that the necessary condition of true peace among the brethren is their personal holiness.

But we shall do better to understand the word in its very frequent sense as denoting the sum of all Divine blessings. And in this case the inference is equally obvious, that we are fitted to receive and enjoy these just in proportion as we advance in holiness. To be perfectly holy is to be perfectly happy; for it is to dwell in 'the munitions of rocks'[2]—behind the bulwarks of salvation—beneath the shelter of 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.'[3] Into this 'peace of God' the Church, says Paul to the Colossians (3 : 15), is 'called in one body.' And therefore also she is 'called unto holiness,' or 'in sanctification,'[4] as her preparation for it, and as the only element in which it can exist.

Nor is this any random, ineffectual call. It surely accomplishes itself. It carries with it the sanctity and obligation of a pledge, and that pledge shall be fully redeemed. '*Faithful is He that calleth you*,' exclaims the Apostle; '*who also will do it*'—*who also will perform*, and that as certainly as he calls, every thing promised or implied in the call.[5] This is as much as to say: Behold the strong foundation of my hope—the animating impulse of my prayers—for you. Let it be also your encouragement in working together with God towards

[1] 1 Cor. 14 : 33. [2] Is. 33 : 16. [3] Phil. 4 : 7.
[4] 1 Thess. 4 : 7. See p. 227.
[5] Pelagius: 'Quod promisit.' Œcumenius: ἐφ' ᾧ ἐκάλεσε.

the glorious result. Did that result depend on man's will and strength alone, we might indeed despair. But 'God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?'[1]

This argument from the Divine faithfulness is employed in the very same connection in the first chapter of First Corinthians: 'Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called into[2] the fellowship of His son, Jesus Christ our Lord.' And when once that consummation has been reached, with what adoring gratitude will the saved, as they review the processes of grace, repeat those words of the Apostle: 'Whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.'[3]

Having thus again poured forth the fulness of his heart's desire for his brethren in fervent prayer to God in their behalf, the writer cannot close the Epistle without asking for himself from them a return of this dearest of all Christian charities. '*Brethren, pray for us*'—for me and my associates in the gospel ministry. Much as Paul was on his knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Apostle did not therefore feel himself independent of the intercessions of others. On the contrary, his large experience of the power of

[1] Num. 23: 19. [2] 1 Cor. 1: 8, 9 (εἰς). [3] Rom. 8: 30.

prayer made him only the more anxious to strengthen his personal interest at the throne of grace. They were no words of course that he used, nor a mere pious formula, when he said to the Romans: 'Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.'[1] This is plainly the utterance of a deeply-felt need. And so again and again, when inculcating on other churches the general duty of prayer, or the special duty of 'supplication for all saints,' he cannot refrain from urging with a beautiful and earnest humility his own claim to a place in their remembrance.[2]

The 26th verse—'*Greet*,' or *Salute*, '*all the brethren with a holy kiss*'—is one of several allusions in the apostolic writings to a custom that prevailed for some time in the early Church. At certain parts of public worship, as before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, it was common for the members to bestow on one another—the men on the men, and the women on the women—what was called *the kiss of love*, or *the kiss of peace*.[3] You will remember that in eastern countries this particular mode of salutation has always been practised more freely on ordinary occasions than with us. Of course, as adopted by the Church, and applied by her to a holy use, it was a formal expression and

[1] Rom. 15: 30.

[2] Eph. 6: 19; Col. 4: 3; 2 Thess. 3: 1. Compare Philem. 22 and Heb. 13: 18.

[3] Rom. 16: 16; 1 Cor. 16: 20; 2 Cor. 13: 12; 1 Pet. 5: 14.

pledge of mutual forgiveness and affection, as well as of the equality and oneness in Christ of all her children. Forms may change; but the same spirit of brotherly love, and cordial recognition one of another under whatever diversities of temporal circumstances, should ever characterize those who know the love of a common Saviour, and have thus entered into the communion of saints.

From the fact that everywhere else this exhortation takes the form: 'Salute one another,' it is frequently supposed that here the presbyters of the church are immediately addressed, and instructed themselves to '*salute all the brethren*,' or at least to introduce the general mutual salutation by saluting those sitting next to them in the congregation.[1] But, as the latter mode of observance is not at all suggested by the text, so neither can the other be certainly inferred from it. It is enough to say that the precept is delivered to the church at large, and would be fulfilled according to her own established order.

And just so with the 27th verse: '*I charge*'—or *adjure*[2]—'*you by the Lord, that the*[3] *epistle be read unto all the holy brethren;*' there is no reason to doubt that the letter would come first into the hands of the elders, and by them would be communicated to the church. But this also is an inference from the obvious proprieties of

[1] De Wette.

[2] ὁρκίζω. Lachmann, Tischendorf, Alford, read ἐνορκίζω. The same editors omit the word ἁγίοις in this verse.

[3] τήν.

the case, rather than a necessary deduction from the Apostle's language. The church is enjoined to have the Epistle '*read*'—read aloud, and of course in public assembly[1]—'*unto all the holy brethren*,' as being all equally concerned in its instructions and exhortations. That the officers of the church, especially, should see to the execution of the injunction would be readily understood of itself, without any express directions to that effect.

Still more gratuitous, I need scarcely say, is all pretence of finding here a trace of the hierarchical spirit of later times, and of arguing thence for a later origin of the Epistle.[2] But it may perhaps be worth mentioning, as another illustration of the same paltry ingenuity of an infidel criticism, that the same conclusion has been drawn from the writer's solemn adjuration, that his letter should be read to the brethren. This, it is said, betrays an anxiety on his part, such as could not have been felt by an acknowledged Apostle, to secure for his communication apostolic honours![3]

Nor, indeed, is there any real ground for Olshausen's suggestion,[4] that Paul's earnestness on this occasion may have had its source in an apprehension, that the elders might be tempted, for some reason or other, to withhold the letter from the church. No further explanation of the fact is required than is found in the Apostle's knowledge, that what he had written he had

[1] *ἀναγνωσθῆναι.* [2] Schrader.
[3] Baur. [4] He refers to vs. 12, 13.

written by the authority of that '*Lord*' of the church, whose name he invokes, and for the general edification. It was well, moreover, that the common right of '*all the holy brethren*' to the possession of the apostolic writings should be thus explicitly indorsed on the very first of the canonical Epistles. And so in that to the Colossians (4 : 16) : 'When this epistle is read among you,' says Paul, 'cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.' How different this spirit of free and universal communication of the Divine word from the policy, which by and by, and for many ages, ruled the counsels of Christendom! 'What Paul,' remarks Bengel, 'commands with an oath, that Rome under an anathema forbids.'[1]

The Epistle closes, as it began, with the apostolic benediction : '*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*'—the grace which He, our Lord, the Anointed Saviour, alone procured for us, and alone, through all ministries and ordinances, dispenses to the Church—grace free and inexhaustible—grace adapted to all the emergencies of life and death—'grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord'[2]—that grace 'be *with you*,' as your inseparable attendant, your almighty comforter, and your guide to glory.

This parting salutation Paul tells us in the Second

[1] 'Quod Paulus cum adjuratione jubet, id Roma sub anathemate prohibet.'

[2] Rom. 5 : 21.

Epistle (2 : 17) that he appended to every letter with his own hand, for its surer authentication.[1]

The word '*Amen*' is now commonly omitted by the Editors of the Greek Testament, as a subsequent liturgical addition. And there is a still more general agreement in rejecting the subscription : '*The first* epis tle *unto the Thessalonians was written from Athens.*' Not only have these additions to the Epistles no canonical authority in any case ; but in the case of the Thessalonian Epistles they are historically inaccurate ; it being all but certain that both of these were written from Corinth.

[1] Compare 1 Cor. 16 : 21 ; Col. 4 : 18. Only the Epistle to the Galatians (6 : 11) is known to have been wholly written by the Apostle without the aid of an amanuensis.

LECTURES

ON

SECOND THESSALONIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Second Epistle to the Thessalonians seems to have been written not long after the First, and during the same residence of eighteen months at Corinth—probably, therefore, about the year 53. Silas and Timothy were still in attendance on the Apostle ; and while it is certain, from Acts 18 : 5, that it was at the great Isthmian capital that both these brethren rejoined Paul after his late Macedonian tour, there is nothing in the history or in the Epistles that indicates the presence of Silas during any of the subsequent journeys.

To this conclusion respecting the time and place of composition one is naturally led also by the marked resemblance between the two Epistles. The topics, and the style of handling them, are very much alike. Only in the later Epistle we find that, during the interval that has elapsed, there has been a development both of the good for which the church was formerly commended, and of the evil against which it was then also warned. To counteract and abate the latter, in the particular

form which it had now assumed, may be regarded as the principal object of the writer in the present communication ; and to that he addresses himself especially in the prophetic statements of the second chapter, as well as in most of the practical directions and exhortations of the third ; the first chapter being mainly occupied with thanksgiving and prayer on behalf of the Thessalonians, and with an exhibition of the nature and design of the coming judgment, as a source of consolation to the persecuted saints.

Nor in this case, any more than in the other, is there any question about the Epistle's genuineness and authenticity, that need detain us for a moment. The few cavils that have been started for the first time by two or three Germans of the present century, are too much honoured by being mentioned.

THE EPISTLE

TRANSLATED.

I. PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from God our 2
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, 3
brethren, as it is meet, because your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in 4
you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and the afflictions that ye endure:—a token of the righteous judgment of God, to 5
your being accounted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which also ye suffer: if indeed *it is* a righteous 6
thing with God to recompense to those who afflict you affliction, and to you who are afflicted rest with us, at 7
the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with the angels of His power, in fire of flame, rendering ven- 8
geance to those who know not God, and to those who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who 9

shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of His strength;
10 when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all those who believed (because our testi-
11 mony to you was believed), in that day. To which end also we pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of the calling, and fulfil every desire of
12 goodness, and work of faith, in power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. But we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering
2 together unto Him, that ye be not quickly shaken in your mind, nor alarmed, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord is
3 present. Let no one deceive you in any way: for *that day shall not be*, unless there come the apostasy first, and there be revealed the man of sin, the son of perdition,
4 who opposeth and uplifteth himself against every one called God or an object of worship; so that he, in the temple of God, as God sitteth, showing himself forth
5 that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was
6 yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he may be revealed in his
7 own time. For the mystery is already working of lawlessness, until only he, who withholdeth for the present,
8 be taken out of the way; and then shall be revealed

the Lawless One, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and shall destroy with the appearing of His coming: *even him*, whose coming is ac- 9
cording to the energy of Satan, with all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and with all deceitful- 10
ness of unrighteousness in those who are perishing, because they accepted not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; and therefore shall God send them an 11
energy of delusion, that they may believe the falsehood; that all may be judged, who believed not the 12
truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

But we are bound to give thanks to God always 13
for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to salvation, in sanctification of the Spirit and faith of the truth; whereunto He 14
called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand 15
fast, and hold the instructions which ye have been taught, whether by our word or epistle. But may our 16
Lord Jesus Christ, and our God and Father, who loved us, and gave *us* everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Himself comfort your hearts, and estab- 17
lish you in every good word and work.

III. Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, as *it is* also with you; and that we may be delivered from perverse and 2
wicked men: for not all have faith. But faithful is the 3
Lord, who shall establish you, and keep *you* from evil. But we have confidence in you in the Lord, that the 4

things which we command you, ye both do and will do.
5 But may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ.
6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother walking disorderly, and not according to
7 the instruction which he received from us. For ye yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us; for we
8 were not disorderly among you, nor did we eat bread for nought from any one, but in toil and weariness, working night and day that we might not burden
9 any one of you; not because we have not authority, but that we might give ourselves for a pattern unto
10 you, to imitate us. For also, when we were with you, this we commanded you, that, if any one will not work,
11 neither let him eat. For we hear of some walking among you disorderly, working not at all, but being
12 busy-bodies. Now such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that, working with quietness,
13 they eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not
14 weary in well-doing. But if any one obey not our word by the epistle, note that *man;* and have no com-
15 pany with him, that he may be shamed; and count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.
16 But may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord *be* with you all.

17 The salutation by the hand of me, Paul; which is a
18 sign in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

LECTURES ON SECOND THESSALONIANS.

LECTURE I.

II. Thess. 1 : 1–4.—'Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

'We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.'

The Apostle's formula of salutation and benediction has already been considered by us under the First Epistle.[1] We therefore pass at once to vs. 3 and 4, where the writer describes the present state of the church, and his own sentiments in regard to it.

I. 1. You perceive, in the first place, that it was still a *suffering* church. It had been so from the beginning.[2] And from the strong language here used—'*all your*

[1] The only point of difference between the received text of 1 Thess. 1 : 1 and that of 2 Thess. 1 : 1, 2 is, that the latter inserts ἡμῶν (*our*) after πατρί (*Father*) of v. 1. In v. 2 the same word is bracketed by Lachmann, and cancelled by Tischendorf and Alford.

[2] Acts 17 : 5–8; 1 Thess. 1 : 6; 2 : 14; 3 : 3, 4.

persecutions and the tribulations,' or *afflictions*,[1] '*that ye endure*'—we may infer that at this time there was no abatement either in the variety or the intensity of its trials. Numerous and severe, however, as these were, they had not at all broken or impaired the spiritual strength of the church. On the contrary,

2. 'Tribulation wrought *patience*.'[2] Feeling themselves in the hands of a Father, the children of God thought not of murmuring, or questioning either the wisdom or the love of their present appointment to suffering. The former warnings and exhortations of Paul and Timothy had not failed of due effect. As the Thessalonians were not taken by surprise, so as little were they 'moved, by these afflictions.'[3] And this because

3. They were, in the third place, a *believing* people. Their patience was not the stubbornness of natural courage, nor a Stoic indifference, but the 'patience' which, says James, 'the trying of your faith worketh;'[4] and therefore to the mention here of patience there is immediately added a reference also to faith; as when the Lord Himself said to the church of Thyatira: I know thy . . . faith and thy patience.'[5] The afflicted saints were patient, because in the midst of all their sorrows they believed that God loved them, and that even their afflictions were but one manifestation of His

[1] Our common version so renders *θλῖψις* always in the First Epistle, and often elsewhere.—Grammatically *ὑμῶν* belongs only to *διωγμοῖς*, and only *ταῖς θλίψεσιν* to *αἷς ἀνέχεσθε*. This construction is represented in the modified version given above.

[2] Rom. 5 : 3. [3] 1 Thess. 3 : 3. [4] James 1 : 3. [5] Rev. 2 : 19.

love, and the sure precursors of glory. Hence in the First Epistle (1 : 3) this same patience is expressly distinguished as the 'patience of hope.'

It is not merely, however, what may be called the faith of martyrdom that the Apostle commends in this church. He speaks generally in the 3d verse, when he says: '*your faith groweth exceedingly*'—your faith in the gospel; your 'faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.'[1] It '*groweth*,' and thus it shows that it is a living faith. It '*groweth*' at once in the range, and in the strength and clearness, of its vision. So far was their constancy from being shaken by these incessant storms, that their faith, the great primary element of the new life, only rooted itself the more deeply 'by the rivers of water,'[2] and flourished as with tropical luxuriance. To describe the vigour of this growth, the writer employs an unusually emphatic expression[3]—one that occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.

4. And, lastly, the church, thus afflicted, patient, believing, was at the same time a *loving* church:—'*and the love of each one*[4] *of you all toward one another*[5] *aboundeth*.' They had not forgotten the lessons on this subject, which they had been Divinely taught.[6] On the contrary, the violence of their enemies drove the little flock of Christ more closely together. They thus came

[1] Acts 20 : 21. [2] Ps. 1 : 3.

[3] ὑπεραυξάνει. Any intimation, however, of enthusiastic excess—such as Olshausen suggests may perhaps lurk in this word—would have been altogether unsuitable to the Apostle's immediate purpose.

[4] ἀγάπη ἑνὸς ἑκάστου. [5] ἀλλήλους. [6] 1 Thess. 4 : 9.

to know one another intimately, and felt the readier sympathy in each other's affairs. Belonging to the same family—fellow-sufferers in the same cause—they 'looked not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.'[1] They were 'kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.'[2] And this their love '*abounded*'—filling the hearts of all toward each, and of each toward all, and flowing forth in continual reciprocations of affectionate helpfulness, both in word and deed. They mingled their tears together. They 'bore one another's burdens, and so fulfilled the law of Christ.'[3] They were gentle, forbearing, and forgiving to each other's faults and frailties.

II. Such was the nature of the intelligence that reached Paul from time to time regarding his Thessalonians—their sufferings, their patience, their faith, their mutual love. It is only what might be expected, that these reports should have called forth from him ever renewed thanksgiving to God, as they could not fail to excite within him ever fresh emotions of ministerial triumph and joy.

1. The growing faith and abounding love of the church were felt by the Apostle as demanding continual thanksgiving from himself. Because of these things, he says, '*we are bound*'—we feel that we are under a strong personal obligation—'*to give thanks to God*'[4]

[1] Phil. 2 : 4. [2] Rom. 12 : 10. [3] Gal. 6 : 2.

[4] So the common version renders εὐχαριστεῖν [τῷ Θεῷ] for the most part in these Epistles and elsewhere.

always for you, brethren.' And this our sense of duty is no more than what is required by the proprieties of the case: '*as it is meet*,'[1] right, befitting.

Every manifestation of the Divine benignity in whatever form, and especially in the communications of saving grace, may justly challenge a tribute of praise, not only from the recipient, but from all observers. And that the quickening, the preservation, and the enlargement of the Christian life are all equally from God, is a truth which the Apostle ever takes for granted, where he does not expressly assert it. The thanksgivings, accordingly, which in the First Epistle he declares that he was ever pouring forth, as often as he remembered the religious attainments of this church,[2] are now again renewed over their increase.

But here there were other considerations that stimulated his gratitude, and deepened his feeling of obligation. They, to whom this Divine favour had been shown, were his '*brethren*,' and both on that ground very dear to him, and because they had been introduced into the fellowship of Christ and His people by Paul's own hand. The great spiritual prosperity, therefore, with which they were blessed, was the confirmation

[1] These words, therefore, are not a mere parenthetical repetition of ὀφείλομεν (*we are bound*)—which were a very feeble and useless tautology. And a similar objection, besides others, may be urged against translating them *in a suitable manner*, and so referring them to the appropriate methods and measure of the apostolic thanksgiving;—an old interpretation of Ambrosiaster and Œcumenius, and adopted by Erasmus and Schott.

[2] 1 Thess. 1 : 2, 3.

and seal of his earnest and self-denying labours on their behalf. And, if you remember what was the burden of his unceasing intercessions for them at the throne,[1] you will readily believe that he may also have regarded it as the direct answer to his prayers. So remarkable, indeed, was this prosperity, that the Apostle could still[2] appeal to them as furnishing in some important respects an example for all believers.

2. '*So that*,' he adds, '*we ourselves*' as well as others, your brethren—'*we ourselves*,' who formerly were contented with hearing your praise spoken by them[3]—we the Apostles and ministers of Christ—we your fathers in the gospel, and loving teachers—'*we ourselves*'[4] can no longer contain our joy, but '*glory in you in the churches of God*'—here in Corinth and all around—'*for your patience and faith*.' We may thus be said to anticipate in some degree our future reward. 'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Or are not ye also, before our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy.'[5]

Thus did Paul, amidst all his own present cares and perils, rejoice before God and man over a remote, but still fondly remembered, church.

How pure, how generous, how Christlike, is this

[1] 1 Thess. 3 : 10–13. [2] Compare 1 Thess. 1 : 7. [3] 1 Thess. 1 : 8, 9.

[4] The emphasis has sometimes been improperly explained as intended to distinguish Paul himself from his associates, Silvanus and Timothy.

[5] 1 Thess. 2 : 19, 20.

spirit of our Apostle! And how worthy of all imitation! Do we, brethren, cherish this lively sympathy with the scattered members of the body of Christ, so as to make their joys and their sorrows our own?

The true answer to this question depends on another: Are our own souls prospering? Are they, if 'holding the Head'[1] at all in any living sense, doing so by means of a free, firm, healthy connection? Or are all the channels of communication clogged and obstructed? In other words, are we stationary, or retrograde, or advancing Christians? Is our condition such as would move Paul, were he now among us, to ceaseless thanksgivings? Or would he wonder at, and weep over, our sluggishness and torpor, our worldliness and carnality, our purblind vision of the great things of faith, and callous indifference to whatever concerns Christ and the Church? There is nothing more observable in the apostolic writings, than the urgency with which these first leaders of the faithful advanced, and required their followers to advance, ever onward to perfection. There is absolutely not the least trace, even in their warmest congratulations, of the temper that so benumbs and paralyzes us modern professors—the temper, I mean, of an incurious, self-satisfied resting in present things. And it is at once delightful and encouraging to observe, how extensively the same earnest spirit pervaded some at least of the apostolic churches. Such a church, for example, as this of Thessalonica—with her 'faith grow-

[1] Col. 2: 19.

ing exceedingly, and the love of each one of all her members toward one another abounding'—could enter far more really and heartily, than, it may well be feared, any of us can do, into that noble declaration of Paul's own experience: 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.'[1]

[1] Phil. 3: 12–14.

LECTURE II.

II. THESS. 1 : 5–10.—'*Which is* a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you, who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.'

IN these verses the Apostle, having spoken of the 'persecutions and afflictions' of the church, and of its 'patience and faith' in the midst of all, goes on to establish and comfort his brethren by setting forth the righteousness and certainty, the time and manner, the nature and result, of the coming Judgment—that solemn crisis in this world's history, which shall fully justify the faith of God's children, and for ever supersede their present necessity of patience, by putting a final period to their woes.

I. The *certainty* of this is involved in its *righteousness*. It rests on these two great principles; that 'verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth,'[1] and that He judgeth 'righteous judgment.'

From these premises, indeed, it might seem to be the readiest inference, that, in a world presided over by infinite rectitude, wisdom and power, it should be always and everywhere, and so as to admit of no possible mistake or misconception by any one, well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked.[2] And such, accordingly, is the inference that is often hastily drawn. Some thought of the kind, more or less consciously indulged, may be said to lie at the bottom of the strong popular tendency to estimate character according to the outward and apparent success or failure in life. And hence too such a man as Kossuth dares to claim in peremptory tones from the justice of God the present triumph of what he may rightly deem a just cause. Nay, is it not on much the same ground, rather than because of any express promise of God, that the Church herself is so generally anticipating her Millennium during the existing dispensation?

But the whole theory is fallacious. And the fatal error consists in overlooking, if not the existence of sin, yet the extent of the disturbance which sin has wrought in the Divine administration of human affairs. Assuredly it is no rare thing, and never has been, to hear

[1] Ps. 58 : 11. [2] Is. 3 : 10.

of innocence oppressed, and vice triumphant, and 'truth fallen in the street'[1]—of the good man pining in secret, disregarded and forgotten by a giddy generation, and of 'the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.'[2] It is, in fact, this very disproportion which so often meets the eye, between moral character and worldly condition, that has sometimes proved a trial to the faith of God's own children, and even in thoughtful minds

> '. . . sprung some doubt of Providence's sway.'[3]

Much more safe and legitimate is the argument from this ever-recurring and inextricable confusion to the rectifications and readjustments of a future state—'a world of more candour, humanity, and justice than the present'[4]—a world, where the partial disorder that now prevails will be for ever quite restored—where the broad distinction will be clearly established, and the final separation made, between what is good and what is evil—where the opposite tendencies, even now susceptible of demonstration, of the one to happiness, and of the other to misery, will be thwarted no longer, but vice shall be sunk in chains, and virtue elevated to her rightful throne.

To these deductions and surmises of nature, on which heathen wisdom has been fain to lean in her hour of need, revelation first brings clearness and assurance. It

[1] Is. 59 : 14. [2] Ps. 37 : 35. [3] Parnell's *Hermit.*
[4] Adam Smith, *Theory of the Moral Sentiments.*

teaches us to regard this life of ours as intended, not for the full manifestation of God's moral government, but for the redemption of the soul from under the power of the curse—for the trial and discovery of men's spirits—for the gathering and discipline of the Church—and the preparation of all things for the secure establishment and shining forth of the kingdom of righteousness and peace in the new heavens and the new earth. And, while it thus authoritatively announces the coming of an age which shall vindicate the now struggling and oft defeated right, and gloriously redress the wrongs of time, it points, as to the bright seal of God to all its promises, to the resurrection from the dead, and ascension to the right hand of power, of One who was 'despised and rejected of men,'[1] and who suffered 'without the gate.'[2]

Now observe, brethren, that this 'righteous judgment of God' in the case of the Redeemer, and which, in regard to Him, proclaimed itself in various ways in the days of His humiliation, is still working, and toward a like issue, in the case of the redeemed; nor, in their case also, is it left without immediate witness to its presence and power. 'Which is,' says Paul, '*a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy*'—or, *to your being accounted worthy*[3]—

[1] Is. 53 : 3. [2] Heb. 13 : 12.

[3] εἰς τὸ καταξιωθῆναι ὑμᾶς. The interpretation, *that ye may be*—or *become—worthy*, though adopted by Estius, Bengel, Baumgarten, Michaelis, and one or two others, is forbidden by the uniform usage. As little to be approved is the immediate connection of these words,

'*of the kingdom of God, for which also ye suffer;*' such being the design and tendency, and such the certain result, of God's righteous judgment concerning His afflicted saints.[1]

And what, then, is the '*token*'[2]—*indication—proof*—of it, to which the Apostle refers? This some find in the bare fact that believers now suffer. The argument is taken to be of this sort: If God so chastise His own children, much more severely will He punish their persecutors.[3] And then 1 Pet. 4: 17, 18 is cited as parallel: 'For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?' Or simply thus: God is just, and there must therefore be a future judgment.[4] The leading thought, however, in the previous verse—that which awakened the Apostle's thanksgiving to God and his glorying among the churches—was, not that his brethren were now, for the gospel's sake, in circumstances of trial, but the spirit of Christian heroism in which they endured. To the same thought, as I conceive, a like prominence must belong in the ap-

as an expression of the purpose for which the Thessalonians suffered, with the close of v. 4; the intervening clause being then construed as a parenthetical exclamation (Bengel, Zachariæ, Burton, Trollope).

[1] It is quite unnecessary, therefore, to restrict this judgment, with Olshausen, to the present life, or, with Lünemann, to the future.

[2] ἔνδειγμα. [3] Augustine, Bede, Anselm—as cited by Estius.

[4] Calvin, Musculus, Aretius, Beza, Koppe, Pelt, and others.

positional reference of the 5th verse ;[1] and, accordingly, it is in its bearing on these brethren that the Divine judgment is here primarily considered. The patience and faith of the Thessalonians under persecution indicated the righteous judgment of God, by which they were even now, and hereafter were to be still more gloriously, accredited as meet heirs of His kingdom ; just because, and in so far as, there was thus indicated the realization in their character and condition, as God's justified, sanctified, and at the same time suffering people, of the very grounds on which, by the laws of that kingdom, such a judgment must proceed.

The best illustration, therefore, of this connection is in the words afterward addressed by our Apostle to the neighbouring church of Philippi : 'And in nothing terrified by your adversaries : which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.'[2] This very calmness in the presence of danger and death—the invincible might of unresisting weakness—the prayer for their enemies of sinking martyrs—the eye of faith beaming even from the dust with the reflection of things not seen—such is the spectacle, my hearers, that has been known to abash the fury of earth and hell, as the sudden effulgence of the Shechinah itself—of 'the Spirit of glory and of God resting'[3] on

[1] For this reason, among the various constructions that have been proposed of ἔνδειγμα (*a token*), I prefer that which makes it a nominative in apposition with the whole latter half of v. 4 (Winer, Fritzsche, De Wette, Lünemann, Alford).

[2] Phil. 1 : 28 (ἥτις ἐστὶν . . ἔνδειξις). [3] 1 Pet. 4 : 14.

God's servants, and, before all their foes, marking them for His. Blessed '*token*,' truly, '*of the righteous judgment of God*,' when, in the face of the world's calumny and outrage, 'the Lord' Himself thus visibly 'stands by'[1] His own, 'and strengthens' them to do and to suffer all things for His name's sake.

In the 6th verse the righteousness, and so the certainty, of this Divine judgment regarding the persecuted believers, even to its ultimate development in the kingdom of God, which have just been taken for granted, are expressly asserted ;[2] not, however, in the way of a dogmatic conclusion : '*since* it is *a righteous thing*,' but in a formal hypothetical assumption of the result of an appeal, on the question of a fitting retribution, to the instincts at once of reason and of faith : *if at least*—or, *if indeed*[3]—it is *a righteous thing with God*—that is, in God's eyes—to 'render to every man according to his deeds.'[4] Not as if there were the least doubt respecting the righteousness of any part of God's procedure in judging the world. On the contrary, it is the very certainty of that, as something altogether beyond cavil, that justifies the writer in arguing from it conditionally. 'As if,' remarks an old commentator, 'one should say : If God hates the wicked ; speaking thus for the very purpose of forcing the confession that He does hate them.'[5]

[1] 2 Tim. 4 : 17 (*παρέστη*).

[2] The *δίκαιον* of v. 6 is evidently suggested by *δικαίας κρίσεως* of v. 5.

[3] So *εἴπερ* must be understood. Compare Rom. 8 : 9, 17 ; 1 Pet. 2 : 3.

[4] Rom. 2 : 6.

[5] Chrysostom : *ὡς εἰ ἔλεγέ τις· εἰ μισεῖ τοὺς πονηροὺς ὁ θεός. διὰ τοῦτο λέγων οὕτως, ἵνα ἐκείνους ἀναγκάσῃ εἰπεῖν, ὅτι μισεῖ.*

Let it, then, be understood and remembered by us all, that the final judgment, in both its aspects of goodness and of severity, is '*a righteous thing with God,*' let *men* think of it as they will. Not merely is it reconcilable with Divine justice; it is what Divine justice requires for its own satisfaction. Of course Paul did not mean to say, that there was in his brethren's endurance of suffering the least intrinsic merit of itself entitling them to reward at the hand of God, or that in this same sense of meritorious desert they were now, or ever would be, 'accounted worthy of the kingdom of God.' In using such expressions—and there are very many of them in the New Testament—the inspired writers proceed upon the ground of that gracious covenant, in which, through their union with Christ, believers stand, and whose merciful provisions, on God's part absolutely sovereign and free, alone give them all the claim they have on the Divine favour here or hereafter. But that claim, though thus originating, and because thus originating, is an infinitely and eternally valid claim. It is deep and abiding, as the love of the Father for the Son; strong and sure as the word and oath of Him who 'cannot lie'—'cannot deny Himself'[1]—or frustrate any hope which He Himself has raised. In this respect, as in many others, the gospel salvation reveals God's righteousness no less than it does His love. In the manifestation of His love He has entered into voluntary engagements, for the fulfilment of which His righteous-

[1] Tit. 1 : 2; 2 Tim. 2 : 13.

ness is pledged. And so it comes to pass that as, even in forgiving the sins of His contrite children, there is a display of His faithfulness and justice, so neither will He be 'unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love, which they have shown toward His name.'[1]

Just as little difficulty is there in harmonizing with the doctrines of grace the ascription to believers of a personal worthiness of the kingdom of God. This worthiness is but another word for meetness[2]—suitableness;—that meetness of state and of character, as sinners justified and sanctified 'freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,'[3] without which, all Scripture testifies, no man shall enter the kingdom. Only to such has the kingdom been promised. But to all such, by virtue of the promise, it of right belongs. They have all the worthiness of it that the case admits of—all that Divine justice itself demands. And then the very '*persecutions and afflictions*,' which '*for*' the kingdom—or, *on behalf of*[4] *it*—they endure, so far from invalidating or obscuring their title, serve rather to confirm and illustrate it, by at once illustrating and enlarging the grace of God that is in them.

On these grounds, therefore, the patient and believing children of God need have no difficulty or scruple about taking to themselves the full comfort of the

[1] 1 John 1: 9; Heb. 6: 10.

[2] In the Greek both words are represented by one, ἄξιος. Compare v. 11; 1 Thess. 2: 12; Matt. 3: 8; Acts 26: 20; Eph. 4: 1; &c.; also p. 123, &c.

[3] Rom. 3: 24. [4] ὑπέρ.

Apostle's assurance, that sufferings endured in that spirit are themselves *'a token of the righteous judgment of God, to their being accounted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which also they suffer: if indeed* it is *a righteous thing with God'* to deal both with their enemies and with them on the principles of a strict and holy retaliation.

But if such be the *righteousness* of this Divine judgment in its uttermost issues—if the very character of God as holy and just, as well as good, be, so to speak, at stake in it—with what a feeling of *certainty* may we count on it, as an event yet future to us all! The number of events, to which we can look forward thus confidently, is indeed extremely limited. Whether republicanism, or imperialism, or constitutional monarchy, is yet to prevail in Europe—whether or not the enslaved millions of our own land are to toil on in their chains to the close of this century—nay, 'what shall be on the morrow'[1] with us and our families—these, and a thousand other things of perhaps equal interest, are to us all equally uncertain. But not so the fact of highest and universal interest, that God shall judge the world. For this, we have seen, there is a necessity, arising from the nature of God Himself. Not only is it inconsistent with our conceptions of God that His enemies shall always prosper, and His friends for ever be depressed on account of their pious loyalty, but He has solemnly

[1] James 4: 14.

pledged His truth for the ultimate reversal of both these conditions. And accordingly we read that the very day and hour of retribution are already appointed, and all the details of the august ceremony determined, and awaiting realization to their minutest jot and tittle.

II. We are thus reminded of the second general topic presented in these verses; namely, the *time and manner* of the future judgment.

It shall be, says Paul, '*at the revelation of the Lord Jesus.*'[1] He is now within the veil, and only faith sees Him there, in the heavenly places. But He has not disappeared for ever from the view of His native earth. That veil shall again be withdrawn, and '*Jesus,*' whom the Church now owns and serves as her '*Lord,*' shall again '*be revealed,*' and 'every eye shall see Him;'[2]—revealed in His own chosen form, and glorified personality, as the Son of man;—revealed, not in momentary vision as 'standing on the right hand of God,'[3] but '*from heaven*'—'*coming*' (v. 10) thence to those who, like the Thessalonians, are 'waiting for'[4] Him—'*coming*' as the Lord and Judge of all, and for the final establishment of the kingdom of God. Ah, my hearers, how will that word of Pilate to the Jews as he led forth to them, in a last vain appeal for their sympathy, the scourged, bleeding, thorn-crowned, purple-clad Witness-bearer to

[1] ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ.
[2] Rev. 1:7. [3] Acts 7:56.
[4] 1 Thess. 1:10. Compare 1 Cor. 1:7 (according to the Greek '*waiting for the revelation,*' &c.).

the truth, be reëchoed that day as by the voice of God to them that dwell on the earth: 'Behold the Man!'[1]

For, as I have said, the time of this manifestation is the time also of 'the judgment of this world.'[2] Jesus, the Saviour, is Himself the Judge, and for this very purpose is He revealed, that He may pronounce and execute God's righteous judgment. 'For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.'[3] This, accordingly, has been from the beginning one urgent motive for the enforcement of the gospel proclamation. 'And He commanded us,' said the Apostles, 'to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.'[4] And again: God 'now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.'[5]

And need I add, brethren, that one most interesting and amazing fact, as regards the *manner* of that great inquest, is just this, that it shall be conducted by Him who Himself once stood a condemned prisoner at a human tribunal, and died a felon's death?

The subordinate circumstances, however, are all of

[1] John 19: 5. [2] John 12: 31. [3] John 5: 22, 23.
[4] Acts 10: 42. [5] Acts 17: 30, 31.

them such as are well fitted to heighten our conception of the solemnity and grandeur of the scene. Some of these came before us in the First Epistle (ch. 4 : 14–17) : two others are mentioned here.

1. First, the Lord Jesus shall be revealed '*with His mighty angels*,' or, as in the margin, *with the angels of His power*.[1] For their own power is not referred to, except as that is implied in their ministerial attendance on the Lord.[2] They come with Him, as of old to Sinai, not simply as spectators, but for the enhancement of His glory, and as the ready executioners of His purposes, both of love and wrath. 'He shall send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.'[3] And again it is written : 'The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'[4]

2. The other feature here specified of this great future revelation of the Lord Jesus, as 'the Judge of all the earth,'[5] is that it shall be '*in flaming fire*,' or literally, *in fire of flame*.[6] These words are often con-

[1] μετ' ἀγγέλων δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ.

[2] Equally erroneous is the interpretation, *with the host of His angels*, adopted by Drusius, Michaelis, Krause, Stolz, Meyer.

[3] Mark 13 : 27. [4] Matt. 13 : 41, 42. [5] Gen. 18 : 25.

[6] ἐν πυρὶ φλογός. Scholz and Lachmann read ἐν φλογὶ πυρός (*in flame of fire*).

nected, as describing the instrument or manner of the vengeance, with what immediately follows in the 8th verse. But it is better to take them, as is now commonly done, as adding another item to the description in the 7th verse of the Lord's appearing, which is thus brought in still another point into harmony with previous historical and prophetic theophanies. You recollect the 'flaming sword,' or *sword of flame*,[1] that attended the Cherubim, on the first manifestation of the Divine glory, 'at the east of the garden of Eden;'—also the bush of Horeb, out of the midst of which the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses 'in a flame of fire';[2]—and then, that more awful scene to which allusion has already been made, Mount Sinai itself 'altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace.'[3] In striking accordance in this particular with these narratives of former revelations are such predictions as the one before us of the greatest of them all, that is still future. 'Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.'[4] This language of the Psalmist is at least applicable to the Divine pageant of which the Apostle here treats, and which had certainly been shown also in the night visions, many ages before,

[1] Gen. 3 : 24 (אֶת לַהַט הַחֶרֶב). [2] Ex. 3 : 2.
[3] Ex. 19 : 18. [4] Ps. 50 : 3, 4.

to the great Prophet of the captivity : 'I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool : His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him : thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him : the judgment was set, and the books were opened.'[1]

And here, brethren, let us pause for the present. Our third topic—the *nature and result* of this coming judgment—together with some practical reflections on the whole passage, will form the subject of a future discourse.

[1] Dan. 7 : 9, 10.

LECTURE III.

II. THESS. 1 : 5–10.—'*Which is* a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you, who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.'

THE *righteousness and certainty*—the *time and manner*—the *nature and result* of the future judgment;—such was the order in which we proposed to arrange for consideration the various topics presented in these verses. The *certainty* of the judgment we regarded as a direct inference from its *righteousness*, as something not merely allowed, but required, by the Divine justice; and we have also seen, that the *time* for the 'revelation of this righteous judgment of God'[1] is 'at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with the angels of His power, in fire of flame.'

[1] Rom. 2 : 5.

III. I am now to ask your serious attention, in the third place, to the *nature and result* of the process, as these are set forth in the passage before us.

It is at once obvious that that process, like the cloud of the Divine presence that parted the Israelites and the Egyptians at the Red Sea, wears throughout a two-fold aspect of severity and of goodness, according to the respective characters and histories of those with whom it deals. And our plan of discourse will simply be, to treat in succession of each of the two great divisions as here described, in connection with the appropriate award assigned to it by the infallible discrimination of the Judge.

1. Prominent in the first of these divisions are the troublers of the Church: '*them that trouble you*'—*those who afflict*[1] *you*—the persecutors of Christ's cause and people.

That the servants of the Lord Jesus should ever have been 'hated of all men for His name's sake'[2]—treated with contumelious violence as personal enemies, or as enemies of society, for the heavenly truth they professed, or for the holiness of their lives—this surely is one of the saddest demonstrations of human depravity. To 'take pleasure in them that do' iniquity Scripture brands as the last stage of moral corruption.[3] But a kindred and no less dreadful exhibition of the same wickedness is, while disowning in our own lives

[1] *τοῖς θλίβουσιν.* Compare p. 420. [2] Matt. 10:22. [3] Rom. 1:32.

all allegiance to the good, to malign and assail it when seen in others. Alas, how often, as we trace the fortunes of the Church in our world, are we compelled to witness this very enormity! We are not suffered long to forget the predicted enmity between the serpent's seed and the seed of the woman. 'Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.'[1] As it was in the family of Adam, the father of the race, so was it also in the family of Abraham, the father of the faithful. 'He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.'[2] And in every age the ancient feud has been renewed. From the streets of how many populous cities—from the still nooks of how many green valleys—from the sides of how many heath-clad and snowy mountains—from how many 'dens and caves of the earth'[3]—does the cry ascend evermore of the blood of slaughtered saints into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth: 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?'[4]

Nor is that cry unheeded. The souls under the altar, long as they may have passed from the memory of men, are not forgotten of God. It was the Son of God, the merciful Saviour of the world, who said: 'And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night

[1] 1 John 3 : 12. [2] Gal. 4 : 29. [3] Heb. 11 : 38.
[4] James 5 : 4; Rev. 6 : 10.

unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you, that He will avenge them speedily.'[1] Often and solemnly had their enemies been warned. 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.' 'For He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries.'[2] God thus makes common cause with His people, and counts their adversaries for His. When, therefore, the Heavenly Avenger at last appears in person on the scene, He proclaims 'the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.'[3]

And mark the equitableness and congruity of the retribution itself: 'It is a righteous thing with God *to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;*' or, as it stands in the Greek, *to those who afflict you, affliction.* There is thus in the case the strictness of requital—the rendering of a *quid pro quo*—or, as we formerly called it, a holy retaliation.[4] And this very principle is frequently recognized in Scripture as determining the nature of the persecutor's doom. Thus of the apocalyptic Babylon, the grand hereditary foe of Zion, it is said: 'Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double.' And it is this same feature of the Divine judgment, that is celebrated in the responsive anthems of heavenly voices: 'I heard the angel of the waters

[1] Luke 18:7. [2] 1 Chron. 16:22; Deut. 32:43.
[3] Is. 34:8. [4] ἀνταποδοῦναι.

say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.' That God should afflict those who afflicted His children is felt by all holy beings to be 'the recompense which is meet'—'a just recompense of reward.'[1]

A more definite statement of what the *tribulation* or *affliction* shall consist in, we have in the 8th and 9th verses, along with a more general and comprehensive description of the objects of this judicial severity. They are there spoken of as '*those who know not God, and those who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*'[2]

The original, of which this is a somewhat more exact translation, naturally suggests, if it does not, as some[3] think, necessarily imply, that two classes of persons are here intended, of which one '*knows not God*,' and the other '*obeys not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*' But if so, it then becomes doubtful who the parties are that are thus distinguished. Some[4] would include in

[1] Rev. 16 : 5–7; 18 : 6; Rom. 1 : 27; Heb. 2 : 2.

[2] *τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσι Θεὸν, καὶ τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούουσι κτλ.* The last word, *Χριστοῦ*, is bracketed by Knapp and Lachmann, and cancelled by Meyer, Tischendorf, Alford.

[3] Lünemann, Alford, and others. But the repetition of the article, with the second participle, might possibly serve merely to give prominence to another, and still darker, aspect of one and the same class.

[4] Aretius, Zanchius, Bloomfield.

the former class infidels and other open enemies of Christ; in the latter, hypocrites and unworthy professors of Christ. Some[1] again think the distinction is between the heathen and the Jews. But the more common, and perhaps the preferable view is, that by '*those who know not God*' are meant such as have resisted and quenched the light of nature; while the second class comprises all, whether Gentiles or Jews, who, having heard, disobey the gospel.[2] It is certain that ignorance of God is frequently with our Apostle the specific characteristic of Gentilism.[3] And it is, moreover, probable that the present, as well as the previous, sufferings of the Thessalonian church had a double source, in the blind ungodliness of the heathen in general, and the special malignity of those who themselves refused the grace of Christ. The offense, then, in one case is a guilty, because wilful, ignorance of God—God's nature and law; in the other it is disobedience to the gospel—its truth, its invitations, its commands.

And in both cases the Lord Jesus, we are told, will '*take vengeance.*'[4] All such[5] '*shall be punished with*'—

[1] Ambrosiaster, Benson, Koppe, Baumgarten-Crusius, Lünemann, Alford.

[2] So Estius, Cocceius, Whitby, Matthew Henry, Guyse, Baumgarten, Michaelis, Macknight, Flatt, Peile, and others.

[3] See 1 Thess. 4: 5 (and compare the Septuagint Jer. 10: 25); Acts 17: 23, 30; Rom. 1: 28; Gal. 4: 8; Eph. 2: 12; &c.

[4] There is no doubt that διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν—literally, *giving* or *rendering vengeance*—must be construed with Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, not with φλογός or πυρός.

[5] οἵτινες.

shall pay the penalty[1]—'*everlasting destruction from the presence*,' or *face*,[2] '*of the Lord and from the glory of His strength*.'[3]

As to what these words really involve, I have not much to say. The due impression which they should make you are more likely to receive through the silent meditation of them in your own minds, than from any explanations I might give of what, in its general import, is sufficiently plain of itself. Yet, plain as it is, it is scarcely to be wondered at, that some, even, who do not utterly and avowedly disown the authority of this book as the word of God, are still disposed to relieve in a measure, by means of hermeneutical ingenuity or violence, the darkness of a declaration so appalling.

Thus, to get rid of the horror of an eternal hell, it has been said that '*destruction*' may here mean annihilation. But this notion of the absolute extinction of the being of aught that God has made—the reduction of any thing whatever, whether a reasonable soul or a material atom, to nothingness—has, it would not be difficult to show, as little support from the teachings of revelation as in the conclusions of natural science. And neither is this at all the ordinary and popular meaning of the word. A ship is destroyed, when, no longer traversing in beauty and with songs the mighty deep, it lies engulfed in quicksands, or, stranded on hidden rocks, it serves only for a beacon, year after year, to all that pass by on their watery way. A tem-

[1] δίκην τίσουσιν. [2] προσώπου. [3] ἰσχύος.

ple is destroyed, however stately the ruins that remain, when for ages it has been forsaken of God and man—the fire on the altar extinct, and the altar itself overturned[1]—and all the once hallowed courts, from which ascended of old the smoke of sacrifice, the odours of sweet incense, and the voice of prayer and praise, now overgrown with weeds and brambles, and become the chosen haunt of doleful creatures and creeping things. And just so we can say with equal propriety that a man is destroyed, who, having renounced his birthright, and burst asunder every restraint of conscience and of affection, lives only for his own ever deeper debasement, 'working all uncleanness with greediness,'[2] glorying in his shame, unmoved alike by a father's entreaties and reproofs, or a mother's tears. Such a spectacle, alas, is not a rare thing in this world. What, if in the world to come it shall reappear, and in far more dreadful proportions, and with features even more hideous? Would there not be enough in such a condition of a being made at first in the image of God, to glorify and enjoy Him for ever, that would justify us in describing it by the very word which the Apostle here employs?

It is with the other word, accordingly, that the experiment of alleviation is oftenest tried. '*Everlasting*,' it is urged, does not always in Scripture mean what lasts for ever, but sometimes what lasts only for a long period. This fact, however—take it as it stands, and

[1] Howe's *Living Temple*, part 2. ch. 4: 'The lamps are extinct, the altar overturned.'

[2] Eph. 4:19.

without the explanation of it that might be given—is very far from settling the question. The utmost that it could prove is, that the present possibly may be, not that it is, one of these peculiar cases. Were it the only fact in the case, there would still be the terrible uncertainty.

But then remember that, if it had really been intended to teach the eternity of future punishment, no stronger words, and phrases, and images could have been found for the purpose than those actually employed. The very word which we render *everlasting*, or *eternal*, is the same that is used to describe the endless years of God, and the duration of the blessedness of the righteous.[1] It is the word twice used in one sentence by the Lord and Judge Himself, in announcing the contrasted issues of the great day: 'These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment: but the righteous into life *eternal*'—two words in English, but in the Greek one and the same.[2] And so we read of the wicked being 'tormented day and night for ever and ever'—of 'the smoke of their torment ascending up for ever and ever;'[3]—and it is not possible to construct out of either language, Greek or English, a more emphatic expression than that, of absolute eternity.

The prospect, therefore, may be ever so dreadful—it may be quite different from what we should desire, or what we should have expected in a universe created

[1] Rom. 16:26; Heb. 9:14; Matt. 25:46; Rom. 2:7; &c.
[2] *αἰώνιος*. [3] Rev. 14:11; 19:3.

and governed by the God of love—there may be mysteries in it that perplex and confound the reason, and stagger faith itself;—and yet after all, when we meet with statements like these everywhere in God's own word—and when we hear the meek and lowly and compassionate Jesus, sitting in the midst of His chosen Twelve, warning them in terrific, threefold reiteration of 'a hell,' whose 'fire never shall be quenched : where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched'[1]—oh, who can but feel, that it is a wretchedly precarious shelter from these terrors of the Lord,[2] when poor sinners run for refuge to their flimsy speculations about *destruction* meaning annihilation, and *everlasting* not *always* meaning eternal!

It is added in our text, that this '*everlasting destruction*'—the penalty to be paid by the Godless and the Christless at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with the angels of His power, in fire of flame—shall be '*from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of His strength.*'

The mere manifestation of these will suffice to effect the instantaneous ruin of the ungodly; as when, in the time of the deliverance of the ancient Church out of the hands of her oppressors, 'it came to pass that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians.'[3] In

[1] Mark 9 : 43–48. [2] 2 Cor. 5 : 11. [3] Ex. 14 : 24.

like manner, the repeated *from* of this verse has been understood by some[1] as indicating the precise moment, and so the ease and swiftness, of the destruction. One thinks of the despairing cry for the fall of mountains and rocks, as a welcome screen from the 'face of Him that sitteth on the throne,' and of the fleeing away of 'the earth and the heaven' from the intolerable brightness of the same Presence.[2]

Others think that the reference is to the source or cause of the destruction.[3]

But it may be better to take the preposition as simply expressive of separation. And then the punishment itself—'*everlasting destruction*'—will consist primarily in ignominious, unreturning banishment, as of the first murderer, '*from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of His strength.*'[4] To 'behold that face in righteousness'—to 'be with Jesus where He is, that they may behold His glory'—is the heaven of all His friends.

[1] Chrysostom, Œcumenius, Theophylact, Estius, Corn. a Lapide, and others. Compare ch. 2 : 8; Ps. 104 : 32; Is. 2 : 19, 21 (in the Hebrew and the Septuagint); Hab. 3 : 6. Shakespeare, *Julius Cæsar*, i. 3 :

'Cæsar shall forth: the things that threaten'd me
'Ne'er look'd but on my back; when they shall see
'The face of Cæsar, they are vanished.'

The reader will recollect Cæsar's own famous *Veni, vidi, vici* ('I came, I saw, I conquered').

[2] Rev. 6 : 16; 20 : 11.

[3] So Grotius, Benson, Bengel, Macknight, Storr, Flatt, Pelt, De Wette (as probable), Conybeare and others. Compare Is. 13 : 6 [Joel 1 : 15], שֹׁד מִשַּׁדַּי.

[4] So Musculus, Beza, Turretine, Michaelis, Koppe, Krause, Stolz, Meyer, Schott, Olshausen, Bloomfield, Lünemann, Alford, and many others. See Gen. 2 : 14, 16.

It is the sum of the promises—of the prayers of the saints—and of Christ's own prayers on their behalf.[1] And so the day is coming, when to be for ever sundered from the Lord—to hear from His lips that one word: 'Depart from me'—will be found to comprise in it all elements of woe, the darkness and horror, the anguish and despair, of hell.

The last clause, '*and from the glory of His strength*,' might be understood as referring generally to the bright manifestation, on the great day of judgment, of the 'everlasting strength' that is now hidden in the person of the Lord Jesus, for the ultimate deliverance of His people, and 'perdition of ungodly men.'[2] Taken thus, it would be but another way of expressing the fatal disappearance of the lost from the shining presence of the Saviour. And, indeed, it is only a modification of this idea, that is suggested by the next verse, where, in explanation apparently of the phrase before us, it is added: 'when He shall come to be glorified in His saints.' The redeemed Church shall be 'the glory of Christ's strength,' as being herself the grandest, the unfading trophy of His almighty grace, and the sharer and revealer of His kingly power. Not only, therefore, 'from the face of the Lord' shall the wicked be driven forth, but from the presence also of the saved. Between these two parties, closely as they were intermingled here on earth, there shall at last be 'a great gulf fixed.'[3]

[1] Ps. 17 : 15; Matt. 5 : 8; John 17 : 24; Heb. 12 : 14: Rev. 22 : 4.
[2] Is. 26 : 4; 2 Pet. 3 : 7. [3] Luke 16 : 26.

'They shall not hurt nor destroy,' saith God, 'in all my holy mountain.'[1] And, in the very latest of all the revelations of the Spirit of prophecy, we are led by an angel 'through the gates' into the City of God, and, standing there on its walls of salvation, are pointed afar to a blighted, desolate region, beaten evermore by the storms of wrath, and 'dark—dark—dark'[2] with the shadows of the second death. We look on in wonder and awe, and receive no other explanation of the terrible scene than this: 'Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the whoremongers, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.'[3]

I have thus discoursed to you, my hearers, of one of the two aspects of 'eternal judgment'—one of those 'principles of the doctrine of Christ,' which apostolic authority long ago summoned us to 'leave,' that we might 'go on unto perfection.' How strange, how humbling, is it, that even now, after eighteen centuries of preaching, there is scarcely one of those same foundation principles that we are not daily called to 'lay again'![4] The doctrines, in particular, of God's vindicatory justice and of eternal punishment are especially unpalatable to an age, which, more perhaps than any age that has preceded it, is prone to the worship of man and man's works;—an age, to which sin is no longer 'exceeding sinful'[5] as being committed against

[1] Is. 11 : 9. [2] Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, 80.
[3] Rev. 22 : 14, 15 (*οἱ κύνες*, &c.). [4] Heb. 6 : 1, 2. [5] Rom. 7 : 13.

the holiness and grace of God, but a misfortune rather, or the fruit of physical derangement, or of erroneous education, or—best of all, because still more philosophical and profound—it is a necessary and useful, though transient, stage in the universal development of things! —an age, in fine, that tolerates, and frequently even patronizes, a diluted Christianity itself, not because of its supernatural character and claims, as revealing the only way of escape from sin and death into the glorious rest of the kingdom of God, but on the ground of its supposed tendency to make matters more generally decent and comfortable in this present world.

Such—it will, I think, be acknowledged—is the drift of a very great deal of modern speculation, and such the present tone of society at large. Of course, Infidelity is not slow to discern and push her advantage. She may now be seen any day walking abroad in the garb of a Sister of Charity—far more charitable, and benevolent, and tender-hearted she, than those cramped, sullen, ignorant old theologians; far more so than the curious and interesting, but very imperfect and untrustworthy, collection of documents, called the Bible; far more so than the God whom that Bible makes known. Nay, so resolute and so comprehensive is her charity—so natural is it for her to think well of every body—that she will calmly tell you, and in the kindest and most complimentary manner, after you have set forth your faith on these serious themes, that, say what you will, you do not really believe any such thing. She has

too good an opinion of your amiable disposition. In fact, no sane man can possibly believe, or ever has believed, these horrible doctrines. At least, if he did, they would drive him mad; and so forth:—our singularly gentle and loving friend, you perceive, thus illustrating in the end her superior charity by looking into the face of the Church of the living God, with all her generations of saints, and confessors, and martyrs, and mildly assuring her that, if not a fool, then in all her creeds and confessions from the beginning, consecrated and sealed as these have been by her prayers, and triumphs, and tears, and blood, she has lied!

My dear hearers, if 'your faith' in this book 'stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God,'[1] it will be little disturbed by, and neither will it be at all 'careful to answer,'[2] this insidious and insolent profanity. But may it not be feared that I now address some young, unstable souls, that are already perplexed and tainted by it? For their sakes, therefore, I must be allowed, before I close, to throw out two or three suggestions, which, however, I can do little more than commend to their own earnest reflection.

1. Before, then, you hastily conclude that 'God is unrighteous who taketh vengeance,'[3] you will do well to consider, in the first place, that it is not a fancy, or a theory, or a peculiarity of Christian doctrine, but an indubitable, palpable fact, that sin and misery do exist in the world—have abounded in it for ages, and as far

[1] 1 Cor. 2:5. [2] Dan. 3:16. [3] Rom. 3:5.

back as secular history can grope her way. Now this fact our infidel philanthropist, whom we shall suppose to have not yet graduated as an atheist, will find to be just as irreconcilable with his sentimental notions as the dogma of eternal punishment. And not only so, but, after all the laborious, anxious efforts of all the schools of philosophy in ancient times and in modern, it remains to this day an unsolved, perhaps insoluble, problem for human reason, to account for that fact of the existence of evil on any principles of a respectable deism. It is perfectly obvious, at any rate, that the man who *is* able to explain to his own satisfaction how, under the government of a God of infinite holiness, infinite love, infinite wisdom, and infinite power, there are at this moment, and were, say, six thousand years ago, and have been ever since, so much vileness and cruelty and fraud and sorrow in the world, is scarcely justified in scouting the idea as an incredible impossibility, that the same things may be to-morrow, or six thousand years hence, or at any other conceivable point in the future. In a word, if the character of God did not require Him to prevent the entrance of these things into His universe, how will you go about to demonstrate, that He is bound some time or other to exclude them from it. If you say that their temporary existence may lead to great good, I just ask, How do you prove that their eternal existence may not lead to still greater good?

2. In the second place, remember that it is the Bible, and only the Bible, that opens up to faith a certain

prospect, if not of the annihilation of moral evil with its consequent effects, yet of its separation from the good, of its seclusion, limitation and punishment. For I will add,

3. In the third place, that the emotions of love and pity are not more natural to the heart of man than is the sentiment of justice. An indiscriminating mercy—a yielding softness of temper that can make no distinctions and resist no solicitation—has never been regarded as a lofty or admirable quality, and least of all in a judge. On the other hand, is it not thought to indicate a serious defect of character, that a man cannot glow with indignation at the sight of monstrous treachery or oppression, and feels no thrill of satisfaction when the perpetrator of it meets his righteous deserts? Such sentiments, we may be sure, are but the faintest reflection of that 'perfect hatred' with which God hates all sin.[1] And if the retributions of human justice will sometimes cleave to the offender against human law to the last breath of a protracted life, or even cut that life short by a bloody death, 'and all the people say Amen,'[2] it surely does not become us to prescribe to the thrice Holy One the measure and duration of sin's penalty.

4. Again, when it is said that no one in his senses—let him think and assert what he pleases about his faith—can believe these statements of the Apostle in their obvious import without going mad, the answer is, that

[1] Ps. 139 : 22. [2] Deut. 27 : 15 ; &c.

not only is the argument a very impudent one, but that it contradicts the most familiar facts of experience and observation. For instance, who of us could look on a fellow-man perishing slowly in flames, or in any other great agony, and not almost taste, through the mere force of sympathy, something of the bitterness of his anguish? Well, a few weeks ago we heard of some 50,000 of our fellow-men lying weltering in their own blood in the face of an Italian sun,[1] and, while no one doubted the fact, who of us went into hysterics, or lost an hour's sleep, in consequence of it? And as little would our composure be ruffled, were it made certain to us on unquestionable authority, that on some day, some thousands of years hence, half the population of the globe would similarly perish in racking tortures; just as no man, I presume, since the days of Noah and his sons, ever yet shed a tear about the deluge, that destroyed the whole 'world of the ungodly.'[2] The truth is, that, while we are all very far from realizing as we ought either the glories or the terrors of the world to come, it is yet a wise and merciful provision of nature that saves us from so coming under the dominion of the distant and the future, however certain and however momentous, as to be thereby unfitted for the immediate and ordinary duties of life.

There is no doubt, however, that those compliments to our benevolence, at the expense of our integrity,

[1] At Solferino. [2] 2 Pet. 2: 5.

are meant rather to discredit the Bible. And therefore,

5. In the last place, and because none of you probably have yet entirely got rid of an educational, traditionary reverence for this book, we frankly accept the issue in the broadest terms in which it can be put. So far from being ashamed to confess, we openly and earnestly maintain that the Bible and the unbelieving spirit of our age *are* at war on these points. Choose ye to which of the two you will entrust your eternity. The Bible is not afraid of dishonouring God by vindicating His justice, or by proclaiming, with a truly awful distinctness, and solemnity, and accumulation of phraseology and imagery, the very worst as regards the final portion of His enemies. It claims for the God of love vengeance as His inalienable prerogative; and, as if to flout and defy all these conclusions whether of a false philosophy or a spurious philanthropy, it commits the execution of that vengeance to the Saviour of the world. The very hand that was pierced on Calvary is the hand that shall 'whet God's glittering sword, and take hold on judgment.'[1] The wrath, in which the transgressors perish, is 'the wrath of the Lamb;'[2]—the meek and merciful Lamb of God spurning from His presence into the outer darkness all who have resisted His grace, and trampled on His blood.

And, dear hearers, remember in conclusion that this —this—and nothing less than this—is the guilt that

[1] Deut. 32: 41. [2] Rev. 6: 16, 17.

clings to every man, who, living where you live, shall be found at last—whether or not he ever persecuted Christ in His members—to have lived and died ignorant of God, and disobedient to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Repent! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Pass under the baptism of His sprinkled blood! And then, as for you there will be no condemnation,'[1] so you will attain even now to a calm assurance that 'the Judge of all the earth will do right,'[2] and hereafter will be able to join without faltering in the song that celebrates for evermore the manifestation of God's judgments: 'Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.'[3]

[1] Rom. 8: 1. [2] Gen. 18: 25. [3] Rev. 15: 3, 4.

LECTURE IV.

II. Thess. 1 : 5–10.—'*Which is* a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you, who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.'

From these words I have already spoken to you of 'judgment to come'[1]—its *righteousness and certainty*, its *time and manner*, its *nature and result* as regards the enemies of the Church, and such as 'know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

2. It still remains for us to complete our examination of this subject, by considering its bearing on another class of persons no less concerned in the proceedings and issues of that day.

Who these are may be safely gathered from the

[1] Acts 24 : 25.

marks that are here furnished. Thus, even from the negative description of the opposite class we might infer that those we now speak of do know God, and obey the gospel. But let us rather attend to what is affirmed directly of themselves.

And, first, you perceive that they are an *afflicted* people—*sufferers for the kingdom of God* (vs. 5, 7). For it is not so much the fact that they suffer, that distinguishes them in a world so full of sorrow; but rather the occasion of their suffering, and their spirit and aim in the midst of suffering. It is obvious, indeed, that this characteristic was suggested by the particular circumstances of the church at Thessalonica, as one that shared largely in the distresses to which the infant faith was subjected. But the privilege of suffering in one form or another for the sake of a Christian conscience has not been confined to any one age. And in every age the very relations of the believer to a world that knows him not,[1] and can have no sympathy with him in his dearest affections and hopes, necessarily involve feelings of loneliness and sadness, akin to those of a sojourner in a strange land. These feelings, moreover, are deepened by an ever present dissatisfaction with himself, as well as with things around, and by longings after 'that which is perfect.'[2] So that, without straining the words, it may be affirmed of all the followers of the Lamb, that for the kingdom of God they also suffer. In all of them, as in their brethren of primitive times, is ful-

[1] 1 John 3: 1. [2] 1 Cor. 13: 10.

filled that tender saying of their sympathizing Lord: 'And ye now therefore have sorrow'[1]—a peculiar, unworldly sorrow, springing from the love they bear to Him.

The 10th verse supplies additional means of identification. It there becomes evident that the rewards of the judgment are for all '*saints*'—the *Lord's saints;*—for such as are 'holy to the Lord'[2] by separation from an unholy world, consecration to His service, and participation of His own holiness.

Observe also that to this state and character they attain, not through any original superiority of their own, nor by any efforts of their own will, nor 'by works of righteousness that they have done,'[3] but through faith; '*all those who believed*'[4] being plainly the equivalent in one clause of '*His saints*' in the other. What they believed was a testimony—'*our testimony*,' says Paul, just as in the First Epistle (1 : 5) he speaks of 'our gospel;' —in both places meaning the same thing as when he says to the Corinthians, that he had 'declared unto them the testimony of God,'[5] or, according to the fuller expression of another Apostle, 'the testimony which God hath testified concerning His Son.'[6] This Divine testimony it was that Paul spent his life in repeating, having

[1] John 16 : 22. [2] Luke 2 : 23. [3] Tit. 3 : 5.

[4] According to the reading (*πιστεύσασιν*, for *πιστεύουσιν*) that has been long adopted by all the editors. [5] 1 Cor. 2 : 1.

[6] 1 John 5 : 10 (*τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν μεμαρτύρηκεν ὁ Θεὸς περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ.*

first been enabled, by a personal experience of its truth and power, to make it his own testimony. He delivered it at Thessalonica—'*to you*'[1]—and there it '*was believed*,' and, 'as in all the world,'[2] it brought forth fruit in the holiness of its professors, and in the patience with which they endured affliction for its sake. By means of this sudden parenthetical reference to the Thessalonian faith in the gospel, the writer would at once encourage and warn those to whom his letter is addressed, while at the same time he justifies himself in pointing these suffering brethren, for *their* consolation, to the developments and results of the great day.

It is to the believing saints of God, therefore, and to them only—however various and severe may be their present trials—that that day will bring, not punishment and everlasting destruction, but a very different portion. What that is, we are now to inquire.

It is here set forth to us under several striking emblems.

(1.) It is, first, a *kingdom*—'*the kingdom of God*;'—'the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him;'[3] which God will finally establish on the ruins of the curse, and of all perishable things; and in which God Himself shall reign.[4]

[1] ἐφ' ὑμᾶς. The common version, however, is correct in connecting this with μαρτύριον, not, as some (Wesley, Macknight, Stolz, and others), with ἐπιστεύθη (*was believed*). Compare Luke 9: 5.

[2] Col. 1: 6. [3] James 2: 5.

[4] See Lecture on 1 Thessalonians 2: 12.

Of this 'kingdom of God' God's children are to be 'accounted worthy.' As His children, they are 'heirs' of it. They are 'called into' it. They 'also suffer for' it. And yet, after all, how strange a thing it is, when we bear in mind what they once were—bond-servants of sin and Satan—that 'the righteous judgment of God' concerning them should ever have such an issue as this! What would be the amazement of the world, if this nation at its next general election should, by a cordial and unanimous vote, summon to the presidential chair some rude tenant of a slave's hut! And would not the wonder be doubled, if, on the day of the inauguration, the now obscure and degraded object of the choice should prove to be every way fitted, and that in a very eminent degree, for the dignities and the duties of his high office? Well, here is an infinitely greater wonder still. The Lord 'raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory'[1]—His own throne.[2] For these 'heirs of God' are 'joint heirs with Christ'[3]—the 'King of kings, and Lord of lords'—'the Prince of the kings of the earth.'[4] He calls them not servants, but friends. He shows them all things that Himself doeth, and associates them with Himself in all.[5]

Sadly, therefore, do they limit and obscure 'the hope set before us,'[6] who can think of heaven only as an

[1] 1 Sam. 2 : 8. [2] Rev. 3 : 21; Matt. 25 : 31. [3] Rom. 8 : 17.
[4] Rev. 1 : 5; 19 : 16. [5] John 5 : 20; 15 : 15. [6] Heb. 6 : 18.

eternal psalm-singing, alternating with periods of repose in bowers of amaranth by the river of life, and even this, to use the words of Dr. Chalmers, in some 'lofty aerial region, where the inmates float in ether, or are mysteriously suspended upon nothing—where all the warm and sensible accompaniments, which give such an expression of strength, and life, and colouring, to our present habitation, are attenuated into a sort of spiritual element, that is meagre, and imperceptible, and utterly uninviting to the eye of mortals here below—where every vestige of materialism is done away, and nothing left but unearthly scenes that have no power of allurement, and certain unearthly ecstasies, with which it is felt impossible to sympathize.' No, brethren; we look for a kingdom—'a kingdom which cannot be moved'[1]—'*the kingdom of God*'—the kingdom of heaven on the earth.

And think not that this is but a figure of speech, lightly used to give us some indefinite notion simply of some state of great honour and happiness. It is by far the most common Scriptural representation of the final portion of the righteous, and no doubt it best expresses the reality of the case. No shadowy

'likeness of a kingly crown'[2]

is the 'crown of glory that fadeth not away.'[3] Nor is it any barren sceptre, that God shall put into His children's hands. Much rather is this kingdom the peerless anti-

[1] Heb. 12: 28. [2] Milton, *Par. Lost*, ii. 673. [3] 1 Pet. 5: 4.

type, 'prepared' in God's eternal counsels 'from the foundation of the world'[1]—of which Adam's original supremacy in Eden was but a type, and all these present transitory governments of the earth are but the precursors—and in which alone shall be combined at last, in perfect measure, every element of righteous and blessed rule. For then shall be fulfilled 'the last words of David. . . . He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.'[2] And then too shall be the realization of Isaiah's vision: 'Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.'[3]

If now, brethren, you were to inquire how far the sway of this kingdom shall extend, I should just again bid you remember that it is '*the kingdom of God*'—'of our Lord and of His Christ.'[4] From these very designations might we not safely infer that it shall reach as far as does the creation? And this conclusion, as applied even to the part in it assigned to the Church, all Scripture would seem to confirm. 'The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'[5]

[1] Matt. 25:34. [2] 2 Sam. 23:1, 3, 4. [3] Is. 32:1.
[4] Rev. 11:15. [5] Dan. 7:27.

'For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.'[1] 'Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? . . . Know ye not that we shall judge angels?'[2] 'All things are yours; . . . and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.'[3]

This, then, is the first aspect in which our text leads us to contemplate 'the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.'[4] 'Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom.'[5]

(2.) Another aspect is presented to us in the 7th verse, and one not less precious to the now burdened and fainting children of God:—'*rest*'—'*rest with us.*'

The word[6] properly means *relaxation—slackening*—or, as we sometimes say, a *letting up*. It glances back toward 'the former things,' which shall then 'pass away'[7] for ever—to the present straitened and depressed condition of the Church;—and it announces her coming enlargement, 'times of refreshing from the presence,' or *face*, 'of the Lord.'[8] Here, like the Apostle himself, she is sometimes 'pressed out of measure, above strength.'[9] But then every weight shall be taken from off her breast, and she shall breathe deep and free again in the air of immortality. Now she 'bears the burden and heat of the day,'[10] while doing the Lord's work 'in

[1] Heb. 2: 5. [2] 1 Cor. 6: 2, 3. [3] 1 Cor. 3: 21, 23.
[4] 1 Pet. 1: 13. [5] Matt. 25: 34. [6] *ἄνεσιν.*
[7] Rev. 21: 4. [8] Acts 3: 19 (*ἀναψύξεως ἀπὸ προσώπου*).
[9] 2 Cor. 1: 8. [10] Matt. 20: 12.

the high places of the field.'[1] Then she shall 'sit down under His shadow with great delight.'[2] That will be the eternal 'sabbatism of the people of God.'[3] In a far higher sense even than is now true of the dead in Christ, they shall 'rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.'[4] They shall rest from the solicitations of evil in their own hearts, and from the agitations of remorse—from the world's temptations, and from Satan's assaults and snares—from the rage, and violence, and scorn of the ungodly, and from their own mutual misconceptions, and jealousies, and suspicions—from all sickness, and sorrow, and care, and fear—from all doubt and perplexity as to the path of duty—as well as from that weakness and weariness of the flesh, that now so often overcomes the willingness of the spirit.

For, as we have already seen, this rest of God's 'royal priesthood'[5] will be no sluggish inactivity. It is rather a state of absolute freedom from every influence and impediment, that might arrest or impair their energy in the Divine service. It will consist in the glorifying and enjoying of God, and that without pause or interruption for ever. With their perfected spirits, purged from all their present dross, and united to the incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual bodies of the resurrection, they shall find in that service itself their dearest rest. They shall rest as do the stars in their free, bright courses; or as Gabriel, flying forth, 'a flame of fire,' in

[1] Judg. 5:18. [2] Cant. 2:3.
[3] Heb. 4:9 (σαββατισμός). [4] Rev. 14:13. [5] 1 Pet. 2:9.

the execution of the Divine word, and returning only to resume his station 'in the presence of God.'[1] Nay, Scripture goes far beyond this. They shall rest as 'God did rest the seventh day from all His works'; or as the God-Man rested, when 'He also ceased from His own works' of humiliation and sacrifice, and took His seat on the Father's throne.[2] As in His case, so in theirs, the memory of former storms, and toils, and conflicts—of the cross, with all its bitterness and shame—will survive only to deepen their sense of that 'great calm,'[3] and to endear forevermore 'the rest, wherewith' God 'causeth the weary to rest.'[4]

Nor yet is it, brethren, without a fine significance, that the writer mentions it as an attribute even of such a rest, that it should be enjoyed by the Thessalonians in common with the Apostle himself, and other apostolic preachers[5]:—'*rest*,' says Paul, '*with us*.'

From the beginning the Church has stood in the fellowship of Apostles,[6] and so it will stand for ever;—at present in the fellowship of their faith and patience, and hereafter of their exceeding great reward. 'Ye suffer with us,' Paul seems to say, 'and we with you. Well, we shall rest together. The hope of this,

[1] Heb. 1: 7; Luke 1: 19. [2] Heb. 4: 4, 10; Rev. 3: 21.
[3] Matt. 8: 26. [4] Is. 28: 12.
[5] This is better than to understand the '*us*' of Christians generally (so Turretine and De Wette). The reference of it to Jewish Christians (Bengel, Macknight) is still further from the mark.
[6] Acts 2: 42; 1 John 1: 3.

which we have taught you to cherish, is all that we have for ourselves. And it is sufficient for us all.' Or take Calvin's comment here: 'By putting himself in the same position and in the same class with them, he shows them that he is not speculating about matters of which he is ignorant. Now, we know how much greater deference is due to those, who are not merely through long practice versed in what they teach, but who also require nothing from others but what they are ready to do themselves. Paul, therefore, does not stand in the shade, and instruct the Thessalonians how they are to fight in the sun; but, himself strenuously fighting, he exhorts them to the same warfare.'[1]

(3.) And now, brethren, after all the great things that have been said respecting the future lot of the righteous—of their kingly majesty and undisturbed, eternal repose—methinks, the greatest of all yet remains. You find it in the 10th verse. There we read that the very purpose of the Lord's second coming, as it regards His own people, is, that He Himself may '*be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believed.*' Our translators did well not to change this, as

[1] 'Ostendit enim se non philosophari de rebus ignotis, dum in eadem causa et in eodem ordine se cum illis locat. Scimus autem quanto plus authoritatis mereantur qui et longo usu exercitati sunt in iis quæ docent, nec quicquam postulant ab aliis nisi quod parati sunt ipsi præstare. Non ergo in umbra præcipit Paulus qualiter sub sole pugnare debeant Thessalonicenses: sed strenue pugnans, ad eandem ipsos militiam hortatur.'

many have done, into '*by* His saints,'[1] or '*with* His saints,'[2] or '*among* His saints,'[3] and so in the other clause. It is far better as we have it: '*in* His saints . . . *in* all them that believed.'[4]

For what are we to understand by this? What, but that, as 'the woman is the glory of the man,' so shall the Church, the Lamb's Wife, be 'the glory of Christ.'[5] He is willing to be judged by what He has done, and will yet do, for her. In that truly Divine address of His to the Father, which has been graciously preserved for us in John's Gospel, this is the thought which we perceive again and again swelling His heart, as the very 'joy that was set before Him,' and for the sake of which He was then about to 'endure the cross':—'All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. . . . The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them.'[6]

What He saw from afar in the full assurance of faith and hope, the same shall be made manifest to the universe when He comes again. Into the Church, and around her, He will pour His own glory; so that all eyes, when they look upon her, shall in her, as in a bright and stainless mirror, see and adore her Lord. In the language of inspiration, 'the beauty of the Lord our God shall be upon' her, 'and His glory shall be seen

[1] Chrysostom, Œcumenius, Theophylact, Kuinoel, Macknight, Meyer, Flatt, Schott, and others.

[2] Luther. [3] Michaelis, and others. [4] ἐν . . . ἐν.

[5] 1 Cor. 11: 7; 2 Cor. 8: 23; Rev. 21: 9.

[6] Heb. 12: 2; John 17: 10, 22.

upon' her.[1] Not only is it said to her: 'The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory,'[2] but this likewise: 'Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.'[3]

The whole passage closes with the solemn note of time, 'in that day.' It were very unprofitable to trouble you with an account of the various ways in which this clause has been handled by commentators. Calvin thinks it was added for the sake of 'restraining the desires of the faithful from making undue haste;'[4] as if it had been said: '*then, not sooner.*' Connected, however, as it appears to be, with the whole result of the Lord's advent, so far as that is expressed in the 10th verse,[5] its main force probably is to represent the issue of the Divine judgment, there described, in the glorification of the Church, as consummated at one and the same time with the eternal overthrow of her enemies, when that

'. day
'Appears of respiration[6] to the just,
'And vengeance to the wicked.'

[1] Ps. 90 : 17; Is. 60 : 2. [2] Is. 60 : 19.

[3] Is. 62 : 3. Compare Is. 43 : 7; 46 : 13; Jer. 13 : 11; 33 : 9; Rom. 8 : 18; 2 Cor. 3 : 18; 2 Thess. 2 : 14; 1 John 3 : 2; Rev. 21 : 11, 23.

[4] 'ut fidelium vota cohibeat, ne ultra modum festinent.'

[5] Not with the words, *He shall come* (Bengel, Newcome, Bloomfield, Conybeare, and others), nor with '*to be glorified*' exclusively (Martin's French version), nor yet exclusively with '*to be admired*' (Burton, Schott, Penn, Lünemann, Alford;—Lünemann suggesting that the addition is intended merely to balance, in the second half of the verse, the '*when He shall come*' of the first).

[6] So Milton (*Par. Lost*, xii. 539–541) seems to translate ἀνάψυξις of Acts 3 : 19.

And how vivid is the contrast that is thus brought out between the relations of the friends, and of the foes, of Christ, to the glory that shall then be revealed! '*That day*'—that revelation—shall suffice for the clear and final determination of both parties. The same glory that repels, scatters, destroys the one, is to the other the very centre of a blessed attraction—the bond of an indissoluble union—a congenial element of joy and praise, that shall pervade the whole being of the redeemed, filling it to overflowing.

In conclusion, dear hearers, I call upon you to 'glorify God,' whose declared purpose it is to 'give such power unto men'[1]—who hath already given it to the Church in the person of her Representative and Forerunner within the veil. Of this 'far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory' I have, it is true, spoken to you as a child, according to a child's understanding and thought. 'For now we see through a glass, darkly. . . . We know in part, and we prophesy in part.'[2] But as to any full and adequate perception or apprehension of what is so

'dark with excessive bright,'[3]

'it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.'[4]

[1] Matt. 9 : 8. [2] 1 Cor. 13 : 9, 11, 12; 2 Cor. 4 : 17.
[3] Milton. [4] 1 John 3 : 2.

Meanwhile, believer, strive daily to live in the habitual remembrance of your glorious destiny, and of Him to whose wondrous love you owe it all. Then will you hate sin more and more, and 'purify yourself even as He is pure.'[1] Nor will you grudge whatever time and effort and money may be required of you for the furtherance of the great interests for which He died.

And let me ask all that hear me, Is not 'the inheritance of the saints in light' something worthy of your ambition? Oh that 'in that day' we may all be 'accounted worthy' of it! And, since 'the judgment of God is according to truth,' that will only be as it shall then be found that we have been 'made meet' for it.[2] In what that meetness consists has again become apparent in the early part of this address. In now pointing you, therefore, to the crown of life, I can but repeat the summons with which I closed the last discourse, when 'warning you to flee from the wrath to come.'[3] Repent! Believe! Take up your cross, and follow Christ in the spirit of an unreserved consecration! This do in the strength of the Divine grace, offered to you in the gospel for this very end; and yours will no longer be 'a certain fearful looking for of judgment.'[4] Rather will it be one of the most blessed exercises of your faith, to be daily 'looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,'[5] when He 'will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by

[1] 1 John 3:3. [2] Rom. 2:2; Col. 1:12.
[3] Matt. 3:7. [4] Heb. 10:27. [5] 2 Pet. 3:12.

patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God.'[1]

[1] Rom. 2: 5-11.

LECTURE V.

II. THESS. 1 : 11, 12.—'Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *His* goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.'

THE Apostle had just spoken of the Lord coming at last 'to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believed.' He now intimates that the very burden and aim of his own constant prayers for the Thessalonians was, that the bright anticipation might be realized in them. As that was to be the result of the advent in believers generally, so '*also*,' and with a view to the same consummation, Paul's continual request at the throne was, that the necessary preparatory work might be completed in the members of this particular church.[1]

The Greek phrase,[2] that is here erroneously translated '*wherefore*,' is in Col. 1 : 29 '*whereunto*'; and this

[1] There is no need, therefore, of Alford's arbitrary emphasis: '*we pray also* (as well as wish).'

[2] εἰς ὅ. Compare Rom. 14 : 9; 2 Cor. 2 : 9; &c.

meaning is equally suitable in the present instance. '*Whereunto*,' or, '*to which end also*'—to wit, the glory of the Lord, as finally revealed in and through the Church —'*we pray always for you*.'

To this it has been objected,[1] that the Apostle regarded the future glorification of Christ in believers as a fixed fact, not at all dependent on his prayers; of which, therefore, the only object could be, that *the Thessalonians also* might then be found to be of the number of those in whom that glorification shall be accomplished. It is obvious, however, that, if the principle of the objection be a sound one, it may be urged no less against this view of the matter. All through the Epistles it is taken for granted, that the Thessalonians were to be of the number referred to, and in the very last sentence their faith in the gospel is historically asserted, and yet Paul '*prayed always*' for them; just as the coming of the kingdom of God itself is a fixed fact, though Christ taught His disciples to pray for it daily. But the objection is not sound. Certainly it is no part of Bible philosophy, that the gracious and unalterable purpose of God vacates the prayers and efforts of faith. Only by means of these can we aspire to be co-workers with God toward the predestined result.

Let us, then, pass to the consideration of the terms of the prayer.

[1] By Lünemann; whose rendering is, *in Beziehung worauf, in reference to which.*

'*That our God may count you worthy of* this *calling*' —or simply, *the calling;*[1] the calling, namely, to that glory of which I have been speaking. Now, here again it may be asked: Why should Paul be so earnest in prayer that the Thessalonians might be counted worthy of the calling, when they had already been called? And how can any sinful man be worthy of the heavenly calling? These are thought to be difficulties, and one or the other, or both of them, expositors in general avoid only by means of somewhat forced interpretations.

Thus, very many,[2] instead of '*count you worthy,*' would say *make you worthy.* But the Greek[3] does not allow this. Many others[4] would understand by '*the calling*' that to which the believer is called—the future blessedness; and this also is not a little arbitrary. In the New Testament the word is employed to express the act of God in calling men into the fellowship of the gospel, or else the state of present privilege and hope,

[1] τῆς κλήσεως. Compare 3 John 7, ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος, *in behalf of the name.* It is with very questionable propriety that Peile and Alford allow the article in the present case the force of a possessive pronoun: '*your calling.*'

[2] Syriac, Luther, Grotius, Hammond, Whitby, Turretine, Olshausen, &c.

[3] ἀξιώσῃ.

[4] Beza, Piscator, Benson, Meyer, Pelt, Schott, De Wette, Bloomfield, Lünemann, Peile, &c. There is nothing to support this view in such texts as Rom. 11:29; Eph. 1:18; 4:1, 4; Phil. 3:14; Heb. 3:1, which have sometimes been appealed to. Lünemann's reference to Col. 1:5 for an analogous use of ἐλπίς (*hope*) is better, but not satisfactory.

into which they are thus introduced; and in either case it is fully represented by our own word, *calling*.

You will observe that the whole difficulty, in the way of retaining the proper and ordinary meaning of both the verb and the noun, comes of the idea, that the Divine act, whatever it be, denoted by the former, is preliminary to what is denoted by the latter, whatever that be. In other words, it is supposed that the *counting* or *making worthy* necessarily precedes the *calling*. But this is a mere assumption, not required by philology, or by the truth of doctrine. The preceding context, moreover, on which the present verse expressly depends, would seem naturally to direct the mind forward to that decisive judgment, which God

'Pronounces lastly on each deed'[1]—

that 'Well done, good and faithful servant,'[2] which shall proclaim alike the efficiency of the former call, and the patient, fruitful fidelity of those, who then 'walked worthy of their vocation,' and so 'made their calling and election sure.'[3] Those, who were first bidden to the marriage of the king's son, proved to be 'not worthy,'[4] in that they rejected the invitation, which was their only, but sufficient, warrant to come at all. And so of the 'many,' who 'are called' in the dispensation of the gospel, 'few are chosen.' The rest, by their impenitence and disregard of mercy's free

[1] Milton, *Lycidas*, 83. [2] Matt. 25:23. [3] Eph. 4:1; 2 Pet. 1:10. [4] Matt. 22:8.

offer, 'judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life,'[1] and of the gracious call to it. By the one fact of their unbelief they stand, so to speak, self-condemned—self-excluded from the kingdom of God ; and the proclamation and confirmation of this by the Divine voice at last is just that which constitutes their final doom. When therefore the Apostle, on the other hand, prayed that on that day his brethren might be 'counted worthy of the calling,' this was simply equivalent to a prayer, that their whole life might be such—so conformed to the spirit and intent of their calling—as, in the eyes even of their Judge, would approve the reality of their faith and the sincerity of their Christian profession.[2] For, while it is true that we are 'justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,'[3] it is also true, and it is well for us to be reminded of it, that the final judgment at Christ's coming is on character, as the fruit and evidence of faith. It is only he who is then found holy, that shall be 'holy still.'[4]

All, however, whom God shall thus count worthy, He Himself first makes worthy. And accordingly we find that the Apostle's continual intercession embraced also the process, by which alone this object of the Apostle's heart could be secured. '*And fulfil*,' he adds, '*all the good pleasure of* His *goodness, and the work of faith with power*.'

The general meaning of this is apparent. It is evi-

[1] Acts 13 : 46. [2] See p. 435. [3] Rom. 3 : 24. [4] Rev. 22 : 11.

dently a prayer for the perfecting in holiness of the saints at Thessalonica—just such a prayer, therefore, as we have already had occasion to consider more than once in the First Epistle (3 : 12, 13 ; 5 : 23), and always, you may remember, as here, in immediate connection with the hope of the Lord's second advent ;—so constant and pervading, to the apostolic consciousness, was the influence of that hope on the present life of the Church.

And then the words, '*all the good pleasure of* His *goodness*,' seem with equal plainness to represent the consummation prayed for as no less the direct object and result of the sovereign, gracious will of God ; as when in the First Epistle (4 : 3) it is expressly affirmed : 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification.' The idea, therefore, is a perfectly scriptural one ; but in the present instance, perhaps, it is implied in the fact, that that consummation was the subject of the Apostle's unwearied supplication at the throne, rather than in the particular phrase in question.

You will observe that what is called in one clause, '*all the good pleasure of* His *goodness*,' is probably the same thing as what is spoken of in the next clause as '*the work of faith ;*' and that is the work of the Thessalonians themselves. Again, the word rendered *goodness*, though it repeatedly occurs in the New Testament, is never elsewhere used of God, but always of man.[1] And here, too, you perceive that the pronoun '*His*' has

[1] *ἀγαθωσύνη*. Rom. 15 : 14 ; Gal. 5 : 22 ; Eph. 5 : 9.

nothing answering to it in the original, but is supplied by our Translators, to bring out what they conceived to be the sense.

For these and other[1] reasons it is now common to understand the whole phrase as equivalent to, *every desire* or *purpose*,[2] on your part, *of goodness*, that is, of moral and spiritual excellence.[3] And so the expression, '*work of faith*,' which Olshausen explains as denoting the *faith which God works*, rather means, as in 1 Thess. 1 : 3, the *activity*, or the *fruit*, *of faith itself* in the heart and life of the Christian.

What Paul, then, prayed for on behalf of his brethren was, that every good tendency of theirs, and every[4] operation of faith, God would '*fulfil*.' The gracious process had been begun by Him; and now He alone could complete it. The same hand, which lays the foundation, carries up the building to its topmost pinnacle. Not, indeed, without the willing coöperation of the soul itself. Quickened from the death of sin—made 'alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord'[5]—it

[1] As that the interpretation of our common version would have required τὴν εὐδοκίαν.

[2] εὐδοκία—*mental satisfaction, complacency; inclination, bent.* In Rom. 10 : 1 it is rendered *desire.*

[3] So the Syriac, Schott, Fritzsche, De Wette, Lünemann, Conybeare, Alford, &c. The compromise which some have attempted: *all goodness that is well-pleasing to God* (Theophylact, Grotius, Hammond, Meyer, Olshausen, Barnes, Peile, &c.), would have been allowable, had the Greek been πᾶσαν ἀγαθωσύνην εὐδοκίας.

[4] There is no reason why the force of πᾶσαν (*all*) may not be extended to ἔργον (*work*).

[5] Rom. 6 : 11.

aspires habitually, from the day of its regeneration, after a Divine perfection. It 'consents unto the law that it is good.' It 'delights in the law of God after the inward man.'[1] Its great aim is to bring every thought and intent of the heart, and all the issues of life, into a blessed and eternal conformity thereto. But as these 'holy desires' and 'good counsels . . . do proceed' from God, so it is only by His favour that they are maintained in the believer, and prospered into 'all just works.' Faith, it is true, brings a man into immediate contact with the sources of spiritual life and strength. But faith 'is the gift of God;'[2] and that the faith of the most confident disciple does not fail is one of the standing miracles of Divine grace, wrought in answer to mediatorial intercession. No one knew better than Paul, how insufficient 'we are of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves'—how unable even to retain or use what God's mercy has bestowed—and how far short we daily come of that ideal, toward which the renewed nature still struggles. 'Our sufficiency,' said he, 'is of God.' Oftentimes humbled and overwhelmed himself by the ever present energy of evil in his own heart—despairing then of his own most earnest purposes, and of all inferior aid—he could at last but 'lift his eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh our help,' and 'thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'[3]

There can be no doubt, brethren, that, just in pro-

[1] Rom. 7:16, 22. [2] Eph. 2:8.
[3] 2 Cor. 3:5; Ps. 121:1; Rom. 7:14–25.

portion as our religious life resembles the Apostle's in depth and vigour, will our experience in this respect be the same as his. 'To perfect faith within a human breast,' says another of God's most illustrious servants, 'is to construct a tower out of water, which by its firmness shall withstand all hurricanes and the assaults of tempests, and rise higher than the clouds. For neither are we less unstable than water, and faith must ascend high enough to pierce the heavens.'[1] If, therefore, as the Apostle Peter teaches us, we 'are kept through faith unto salvation,' it is because faith itself is in the keeping of 'the power of God'[2]—or, to use Paul's wonderful words in another place,[3] of 'the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.'

It was this same Almighty strength that the writer invoked, when he prayed God to '*fulfil every desire of goodness, and work of faith, with power,*' or *in power.*[4] He thus sought to engage God Himself to complete the sanctification of the believers, not by some arbitrary, resistless fiat of omnipotence, independently of their

[1] Calvin: 'Nihilo enim facilius est fidem in homine perficere, quam turrim ex aqua struere, quæ soliditate sua procellas omnes et tempestatum impetus sustineat, et altitudine nubes superet. Neque enim nos minus fluidi quam aqua; et fidei altitudo cœlos penetret necesse est.'

[2] 1 Pet. 1 : 5. [3] Eph. 1 : 19, 20. [4] ἐν δυνάμει belongs to the verb.

own desires, and prayers, and watchfulness, and efforts, but through these;—so 'working in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure,' that they might be able, in an important and indispensable sense, to 'work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.'[1] While faith itself is the gift of God, it is no less an exercise of the mind and heart of man. And because, like every thing else about man, it partakes of his great weakness, it needs ever, as it walks in the light of the Divine word, to stay itself on the Divine hand.

But not merely does this expression, *in power*, mark the agency by which the consummation was to be achieved; it at the same time describes the manner in which the Apostle desired to see it brought about—not by fits and starts, nor yet by slow and almost imperceptible degrees, as is so generally the case with us; but *mightily*—by a continuous exertion of the power of God, and a consequently rapid development in the church of the entire Christian character. Just as Paul speaks of himself in his official labours as 'striving according to His working, which,' says he, 'worketh in me mightily'—or as our Lord's resurrection from the dead 'mightily declared Him to be the Son of God'[2]—so in the maturing of these suffering saints for their heavenly rest there had already been, and Paul prayed that there might continue to be, a like display of super-

[1] Phil. 2: 12, 13.

[2] Col. 1: 29; Rom. 1: 4. In both places the Greek phrase is the same as here.

natural power. Then, as in time past,[1] and perhaps at a still more conspicuous rate of advance, faith would grow exceedingly, and love abound, and 'the shining light shine more and more unto the perfect day.'[2]

To the splendours of that meridian we are again pointed in the 12th verse. There the writer declares the ultimate object of his unceasing prayers for the Thessalonians—the grand result, to which each successive stage of present sanctification brought them ever nearer:—'*that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ;*'—in other words, that what had previously been mentioned as the great design of Christ's second advent might be accomplished in them.

It is worth your while, however, to mark the slight variations in the verse before us. In the 10th verse it was said, that the Lord 'shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believed.' Here it is: '*that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*[3] *may be glorified in you;*'—His very *name*—that name which is now your reproach—for the sake of which you are now 'hated of all nations'[4]—which, alas, is now not seldom dishonoured by the unworthy deportment of those who bear it. But then even that illustrious

[1] See v. 3. [2] Prov. 4 : 18.

[3] The word Χριστοῦ (*Christ*) is bracketed by Knapp and Lachmann, and cancelled by Meyer, Tischendorf, and Alford.

[4] Matt. 24 : 9.

name, at which 'every knee shall bow,'[1] will derive additional glory from being the 'name by the which ye are called'[2]—the name of your Lord. It will be glorified in your spotless holiness—in your victory over death and every other foe—in your exaltation to kingly thrones in the 'kingdom and glory'[3] of God—in your loving loyalty, and self-consecration through endless ages to His service and praise. Among the 'many crowns' that belong to '*Jesus Christ*,' the brightest of all, excepting only that which proclaims Him the Son of God, is the one wherewith His head shall be adorned as the '*Lord*' of the Church—the 'King of saints.'[4]

'*And ye in Him*,'[5] here adds the Apostle. There shall on that day be a blessed reciprocation of glory between Christ and His people. As His name shall be glorified in them, because they are His, so they shall be glorified in Him, because He is theirs—not only their Lord and their God, but their Redeemer and their Kinsman. What a glory will it be to them before all creatures, that He who sits upon the throne once shared their sorrows, and died for them! What a glory, that He still wears their nature, and 'is not ashamed to call them brethren'![6] What a glory, to be for ever clothed with His righteousness! What a glory, to 'reign with Him,' and 'be glorified together!'[7]

[1] Phil. 2: 10. [2] James 2: 7. [3] 1 Thess. 2: 12.
[4] Rev. 19: 12; 15: 3.
[5] Lünemann's reference of ἐν αὐτῷ to the name (*ye in it*) is no improvement on the common construction.
[6] Heb. 2: 11. [7] 2 Tim. 2: 12; Rom. 8: 17.

All this, you are to observe in conclusion, takes place '*according to the grace of our God and the*[1] *Lord Jesus Christ.*' It is thus that the Apostle, in the midst of the most glowing descriptions of the Church's privileges and hopes, would keep her ever humbly mindful of the source of all her blessings. The glory is 'according to the grace'—grace in the eternal purpose of the Father —grace in the mediation of the Son—grace in the preparation of the Church for her inheritance—grace in the measure of the glory itself. For great—unspeakably, infinitely great—as the glory is, it is no more than equal to 'the grace'—the exceeding riches of the grace[2]—'of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.' Never will there come a day in the bright, illimitable future, when the redeemed will not be seen casting their crowns before the throne, and saying: 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake.'[3]

[1] Some would render this, *our God and Lord Jesus Christ.* But the application, in this instance, of the common rule about nouns coupled by a conjunction, and preceded by a single article, may fairly be questioned, on the grounds stated by Middleton: 'The difficulty arises from the single circumstance, that Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός' (*Lord Jesus Christ*) 'is a common title of Christ, and is often used independently of all which precedes it. . . . The words Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός are usually taken together; and the acquiescence of antiquity induces a strong suspicion that in this instance such was the received construction.'

[2] Eph. 2 : 7. [3] Ps. 115 : 1.

LECTURE VI.

II. THESS. 2 : 1, 2.—'Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.'

IN the previous chapter the Apostle had sought to establish and comfort his persecuted brethren by a detailed description of the future judgment at the Lord's second coming. From this the transition is easy and natural to what has been regarded as the main design of the Epistle—to wit, the clearing of that great doctrine from a certain misrepresentation, by which, it would appear, the church at Thessalonica had already been to some degree perplexed, and which could have no other effect than to change a topic, that had hitherto been her strength and joy, into a source of extreme disquietude and alarm.

Let us, first of all, and as a necessary preparation for understanding at least the general drift of the interesting, but difficult, section, on the consideration of which we now enter, try to ascertain in what precisely consisted the misrepresentation referred to. We shall need

to use the greater care in doing this, if, as I believe to be the case, there prevails generally, in regard to this preliminary point, a somewhat serious mistake, and one that is embodied here in our English version.

'*Now we beseech you, brethren*'—or, *But*[1] *we beseech you, brethren;*—as if it were said: 'You see what is to be expected, and prayed for, as your portion at the coming of the Lord. *But* respecting that coming itself,' &c. Or, since the writer had been speaking immediately before of his prayers for them, he may have intended to set over against these, by way of contrast and supplement, the entreaty which he now addresses directly to the church. And you will observe that the very tone in which the address is made, while it shows Paul's sense of the importance of what he was going to say, was at the same time well fitted to arouse the attention, and conciliate the confidence, of his brethren.

The explanation of the next clause as a form of adjuration—'*by*[2] *the coming*,' &c.—is illustrated by an old commentator thus: 'If any one thinks that the common reading should be retained: We beseech you, brethren, *by*, &c., let him consider how those must have been disposed toward the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the gathering together unto Him, who in the Apostle's judgment were to be besought on the ground of these two events. For it is not at all cus-

[1] δέ.

[2] So many of the older versions, after the Latin Vulgate (*per*).

tomary for us, in our entreaties, to plead matters which we know to be held in little or no account; but we put forward those things which, we doubt not, are exceedingly dear and longed for. If you entreat a woman by the coming of her husband, and her reunion with him, you have done wisely, provided she love her husband; but not so, if she prefer his absence to his arrival.'[1]

It is proper to state, however, that this interpretation is now commonly abandoned, as being unwarranted by New Testament usage, and as scarcely furnishing a suitable introduction to a formal correction of error on the very topics specified. '*Concerning* the coming,' is probably all that is meant,[2] unless to this we should have to add a suggestion of special interest in the subject; almost as if we should say, '*for the sake of*[3] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

[1] Musculus: 'Quod si quis vulgatam lectionem retinendam, legendumque esse judicat, Rogamus autem vos, fratres, per advontum Domini nostri Jesu Christi, et nostri aggregationem ad illum: cogitet quomodo affectos oporteat eos esse erga adventum Domini nostri Jesu Christi, et aggregationem ad illum, quos Apostolus respectu utriusque rogandos esse censuit. Solemus enim haudquaquam per ea rogare, quæ nullo, vel certe modico in pretio esse novimus: sed ea rogantes præteximus, de quibus non dubitamus, quin sint impense chara et desiderata. Si roges mulierem per adventum mariti ipsius, et sui cum illo conjunctionem, consulto hoc feceris, si sit amans mariti sui: secus vero, si pluris absentiam illius quam adventum faciat.' And so Pelagius: '*per adventum*, &c. Quo vobis carius nihil esse, sum certus': '*by the coming*—than which, I am sure, there is nothing dearer to you.'

[2] So ὑπέρ is here explained by most.

[3] Luther: '*der Zukunft halben.*' It was to express some such shade of meaning, that ὑπέρ seems to have been preferred to περί.

And here, brethren, at the outset it is of the utmost moment that you firmly settle it in your own minds, that this coming is none other than that, whose glory shines so brightly in the first chapter—the personal, bodily coming of Immanuel from the right hand of the Father. That Paul was thinking of this, and of nothing else, is plain—to look no farther—from two marks of identity, that are supplied by the sentence before us. With this coming is associated our '*gathering together unto*' the Lord; and this coming introduces what the second verse calls '*the day of Christ*.'[1] But the meaning of both these expressions had already been determined by the First Epistle, as well as by the previous portion of the Second.[2] The Thessalonians could have not the least difficulty in referring both to the time, when all believers, the living and the dead, were to be 'caught away together to meet the Lord, into the air'—the day of Christ's final triumph over all His foes.

What, then—we are now ready to inquire—what was the particular error, respecting this great hope of the Church of God, to which these brethren were exposed, and against which the Apostle labours so earnestly to guard them.

Lünemann even asserts, that 'there is nothing to hinder our allowing the preposition its most proper force. The sense is: *In the interest of* the coming; that is, in order to keep it clear from every thing erroneous.' But this is too artificial.

[1] Or, according to the reading now generally approved, *the day of the Lord.*

[2] See on 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:14–17; 5:2, 3; 2 Thess. 1:6–10.

'But we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.'

The mental commotion here described is evidently not that which a sudden joy might occasion, but the agitation of fear.[1] The disciples, it appears, were in danger of being '*shaken in mind*'—literally, *from their mind*,[2] like a ship tossed in a rolling sea from its moorings; or somewhat as we say, *driven out of their mind*—and *alarmed*.[3] And is it not then a little surprising, that the mere idea of the nearness of the Lord's advent should be likely to strike with panic such a church as the one at Thessalonica?—a church not only 'called and chosen and faithful,'[4] but actually represented in these Epistles as 'waiting for' that very consummation as the end of all her sorrows, and the beginning of her eternal joy. Only the 'evil servant' finds

[1] Œcumenius: ταραχθῆναι καὶ φοβηθῆναι.

[2] σαλευθῆναι (from σάλος, *tossing motion*, as of the sea) ἀπὸ τοῦ νοός—the article in such cases having the force of a pronoun.—By many, νοῦς is understood to denote the more correct views which the Thessalonians had hitherto entertained, as on other topics, so especially on that of the expected advent. Some even (Baumgarten, Storr, &c.) find in it a specific reference to the real sense of the writer's own words in his former Epistle. Little as this is warranted by the Greek, it is much better than Macknight's gloss: '*shaken from your purpose* of following the business of the present life'!

[3] θροεῖσθαι. Compare the two other places where this word occurs, Matt. 24: 6, and Mark 13: 7.

[4] Rev. 17: 14.

comfort and security in the thought: 'My lord delayeth his coming;' whereas of all true Christians it is a scriptural characteristic, that they 'love His appearing.'[1] During periods especially of severe and general trial, Faith is seen to look out of the window, and listen for the sound of her returning Saviour. At such times 'strength must be gathered for endurance; but in no way,' says Calvin, 'can this better be done, than by hoping for, and, so to speak, gazing at, the speedy coming of the Lord.'[2] Whence, but from the gleaming fountain of this blessed hope, does Paul in this very Epistle draw the consolation, with which he would refresh and strengthen his afflicted brethren?

Here, then, is one difficulty in the case, as it is presented to the reader of our English Bible. Another, and one no less serious, arises from the fact, that the text, as there given, presents a singular and solitary interruption of what we know to be the uniform tenor of the New Testament on this subject.[3] Even long after this Paul himself continued to proclaim among the churches that the Lord was at hand.[4] And yet here he seems to protest against that identical statement as a perversion of his own doctrine. Calvin's solution, that the crisis was at hand to the eye of God, 'with

[1] Matt. 24:48; 2 Tim. 4:8. Compare Luke 21:28; Rom. 8:23; Tit. 2:13; 2 Pet. 3:12; Rev. 22:20; &c.

[2] *Comm. on James* 5:8: 'Colligendum est robur ad durandum; colligi autem melius non potest, quam ex spe et quasi intuitu propinqui adventus Domini.'

[3] See pages 76, 77.

[4] See Rom. 13:12; Phil. 4:5.

whom a thousand years are as one day,'[1] may help to explain the New Testament phraseology to which I have just alluded; but, in the absence of all reference to it in the present context, it would not satisfactorily account for so marked an inconsistency in the apostolic teaching.

The truth is, as I hope now to show you, the whole of this perplexity is simply owing to a mistranslation.

The phrase *is at hand* occurs twenty times elsewhere in the New Testament; and in not one of those instances does it stand for the Greek word so rendered here.[2] This of itself is certainly somewhat suspicious. And what is still more remarkable is, that that same word, though it is found seven times in the New Testament, is nowhere else rendered as it is here, but in five places[3] by *present*, and once[4] by what is equivalent to

[1] 'Instat enim Dei respectu, apud quem mille anni sunt tanquam dies unus.'

[2] But in nine instances for *ἤγγικε*; in ten for *ἐγγύς* [*ἐστιν*]; and once, though inadequately, for *ἐφέστηκε*. This last case—2 Tim. 4: 6—being plainly analogous to our own, it may be remarked in passing, that *is upon me* (Luther *ist vorhanden*, of which Alford's summary negative, though adopted from De Wette and Huther, is not a sufficient disproof; Macknight *hath come*; Swiss version *est arrivé*) is the only idea that either gives the force of the term, or harmonizes with the context: 'I am now being offered . . . my race I have finished' (*ἤδη σπένδομαι . . . τὸν δρόμον τετέλεκα*).

[3] Rom. 8: 38; 1 Cor. 3: 22; 7: 26; Gal. 1: 4; Heb. 9: 9.

[4] 2 Tim. 3: 1; where our version properly has, for the future, *shall come*—not *shall be coming*, nor, as Dr. Robinson, shall 'stand near, i. e. be at hand, impend.' The 'perilous times' were not to follow 'the last days,' however closely, but to be included within them.

that. Such also is the force of the word, wherever it is met with outside of the New Testament.[1]

Obviously, therefore, it was not any grammatical compulsion, but solely the supposed necessities of this particular case, that led our Translators here to adopt for once an unusual interpretation. But take now what is acknowledged to be the meaning of the expression in every other place, and apply it to the passage before us, and this is the result: *that ye be not soon shaken in mind, nor*[2] *alarmed . . . as that the day of the Lord is*—not *at hand*, but—*on hand, has set in, has come, is present.* In other words, the danger, to which the Thessalonians were exposed, was that of supposing, either that the day of the Lord had come in some quite different way from that in which they had been taught to look for it, to wit, as the day of the Lord's personal return; or else that this great crisis had actually transpired, and in that precise shape, while they were not aware of it. When Paul wrote the first Epistle, they were sorrowing by the graves of their departed friends, and the grief of nature was enhanced by an apprehension, that their beloved ones might suffer loss at the coming of the Lord. But now should they hear that

[1] As it is difficult to perceive on what grounds, except those of rhetorical hyperbole, the perfect of ἐνίστημι could be predicated of that which, however near, is still future, so, as far as I can trace the form, it never is so employed, either in classical or Hellenistic Greek, but invariably denotes actual presence.

[2] For μήτε, Schott, Hahn, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Alford, read μήδε.

He had come, and had not called for them, a yet deeper, more agitating emotion must seize them, lest they themselves had forfeited their share in the glory of the kingdom.

Of the grounds, brethren, on which I have rested the interpretation of this last clause, I see not why you should not be quite competent to judge, assuming merely that I have succeeded in correctly stating the facts that bear on the case. The view that has been given is not the common one; but neither are you to regard it as altogether novel. Were it so, you might well suspect it of error. But so far is it from being liable to that objection, that in the oldest version that has come down to us—I mean the Syriac—it appears in a peculiarly emphatic form: '*that lo! the day of our Lord is come.*' And the great Greek preacher, Chrysostom, cites the heresy of the resurrection as being 'past already' (2 Tim. 2:18) as an illustrative parallel, and says that the devil's object in both cases was to 'cut away the anchor' of Christian hope, by persuading the Church that 'all the great and glorious things promised had already received their accomplishment, and that there remained no further retribution.'[1] To the same effect other Greek Fathers expressly assert, that what the deceivers alleged was, that the Lord's coming was 'already present.'[2] And like testimony might be ad-

[1] *καθάπερ τινὰ ἄγκυραν ὁ διάβολος ἀποκόψαι βουλόμενος . . . ὅτι τὰ μεγάλα ἐκεῖνα καὶ λαμπρὰ τέλος εἴληφε ὡς οὐκ ἔστι λοιπὸν ἀντίδοσις.* [2] *ἤδη ἐνστάσης—ἤδη παρεῖναι.*

duced from several of the most distinguished versions and commentaries of modern times.[1]

The view itself, as we have seen, possesses these three great recommendations:—It preserves the ordinary and proper meaning of the principal word; it brings the passage into harmony with the rest of the New Testament; and it accounts easily for the apprehended alarm of the Thessalonians.

After all, however, with our more settled, popular conceptions of the sudden grandeur and universal publicity of our Lord's second advent, it is difficult to get rid of the impression, that any idea of its having taken place unobserved by any implies, not only a very strange, but an impossible hallucination. But let it be considered,

1. In the first place, that the Thessalonians may have had no assurance that what may be called the first act in the proceedings of that day, and the one in which they themselves felt the deepest interest—namely, the gathering together of the saints into the presence of Jesus—will not be accomplished in a quiet, silent way, without causing any great stir in the ordinary current of this world's affairs; as, when 'Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven,' the kings of Israel and of Judah sat unconscious on their thrones, and the sons of the prophets 'sent fifty men' into the mountains and the valleys, 'and they sought three days, but found him

[1] As those of Luther, Grotius, Whitby, Bengel, Lünemann, Alford.

not.'[1] Nor has it been clearly revealed to us, what time may elapse between that meeting with the Lord in the air and the subsequent visible descent on the earth.

2. In the second place, such a delusion, however great it may be regarded, could not be said to be greater than others, which are known to have existed, and on the same general theme, in the apostolic age. I have already referred to the error of Hymeneus and Philetus, who 'said that the resurrection was past already, and overthrew the faith of some.' And you recollect that among the Corinthians there were those who went so far as to deny that there was any resurrection of the dead.[2]

3. In the third place, false alarms of stealthy advents had been actually foretold by Christ. 'Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. . . . Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not.'[3] And it is curious to find, that the whole of one of the oldest commentaries[4] on the words before us consists in a bare reference to that prophecy.

4. And then, lastly, the Thessalonians knew that the Lord's coming had been often compared, and that by Paul himself in his former communication, to the coming of a thief in the night; so that such an untruth, as that against which he now warned them, might the more easily be fathered on the Apostle; especially as

[1] 2 Kings 2: 11, 16, 17.
[2] 1 Cor. 15: 12.
[3] Matt. 24: 23, 26.
[4] That of Pelagius.

he had, moreover, in that same Epistle appeared to include himself and them in the number of those who might be living at the time.[1]

In these circumstances, then, it is not at all wonderful that a church, so recently gathered from among the heathen, so persecuted for her faith in a crucified Redeemer, and taught from the first to look forward to His speedy return as the grand era of deliverance, should on this last point have been in peculiar danger of excitement and deception—a danger proportioned to the fierceness of her fiery trial, and the ardour of her desire.

Observe too that the danger was greatly increased by the nature and subtilty of the attempts that were made in this direction on her peace and constancy. Of these attempts there are three kinds here mentioned: '*neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us.*'

Very few expositors[2] are disposed to regard the phrase *as from us* as qualifying all the three methods, of which it would in that case be difficult, if not impossible, safely to distinguish the first from the two last. The great majority, therefore, limit this construction to the two last, and explain '*spirit*' by itself as some pretended revelation, or spiritual utterance, within the church. In that age, you remember, such utterances were common in the communion of the baptized, and were duly recognized in their ordinary discipline and worship. But,

[1] 1 Thess. 4 : 15, 17; 5 : 2, 4. [2] Erasmus, Reiche, Barnes.

for reasons formerly specified,[1] they were not, even when made without any purpose to deceive, to be implicitly relied on; and in the present case they formed one source of the danger.

Another was the reporting of something as having been spoken by the Apostle himself to the effect here indicated: *nor by word . . . as from us.* Some,[2] indeed, understand by '*word*' the address, doctrine, reasoning, of the deceivers, or more particularly their calculation of the time of the advent.[3] One[4] refers it to some saying ascribed by tradition to our Lord; another[5] to the great recorded prophecy of Matt. 24. But none of these views, excepting the first, could be conveyed by the simple expression used, and all of them seem to be set aside by the fifteenth verse of this chapter, where the apostolic teaching is divided, as to its methods, into oral and written instruction.[6]

'*Nor by letter as from us.*' There were many such spurious documents in circulation in the primitive Church, and some of them have survived to our own day. Even thus early Paul found it necessary to authenticate every letter of his by appending to it the salutation with his own hand.[7]

Now from the solemn and urgent tone of the warning here given we may infer, that in one or another or all of these ways the faith of the Thessalonians had already

[1] See on 1 Thess. 5 : 20, 21.
[2] Chrysostom and his Greek followers, Clarius, Zegerus, &c.
[3] Aretius, Michaelis. [4] Baumgarten-Crusius. [5] Nösselt.
[6] εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν. [7] Ch. 3 : 17.

been assailed. And the expression in the second verse, 'that ye be not *soon*,' or *quickly*[1]—that is, in any hour, on the first assault, of temptation—'shaken in your mind, nor alarmed,' was probably intended for a delicate intimation of the writer's knowledge of the fact, that some of them had already fallen into the snare.[2]

His effort for their recovery, and for the establishment of such as had not yet given way to these groundless fears, will come before us in our next Lecture. Let me close at present with very briefly suggesting two or three topics for your reflection.

1. You will notice, first of all, our continual liability to serious misconceptions regarding the great object of Christian faith and hope. Even while Christ's Apostles were still preaching the gospel, and suffering for it, they found themselves compelled, in almost every church that they planted, to maintain a vigilant and strenuous warfare with errorists, by whom the truth, and the holiness and comfort of the disciples, were all equally marred.

2. Learn, secondly, the futility and peril of all pretended discoveries and revelations, whether of human science, or spiritual mediums, or angelic gospels, that contradict, or would lead us away from, the apostolic tra-

[1] ταχέως.

[2] The simple ταχέως is not, as Storr and Olshausen make it, equivalent to οὕτω ταχέως of Gal. 1 : 6 : 'So soon after my personal presence and instructions.'

ditions, as contained in the canon of inspired Scripture.

3. In the third place, I must again ask you to note, how much and how earnestly the Apostles and their churches were occupied about the coming of the day of God. Can you persuade yourselves that it is any improvement on their habits, that we scarcely ever think about it at all?

4. Again, from the example of the Thessalonians, deceived as they were, you may learn that to the enemies of Christ there is a most real ground of alarm, in the prospect of the rapture of the saints to meet the Lord, while they themselves shall be left behind, as fuel to the burning. 'Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.'[1] Infallible—fatal—discrimination!

5. Finally, lift up your hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only true centre of all genuine and lasting union. He is so to the universe of God, God having purposed from of old to reconcile all things in Him. He will yet be so to Israel, whom He hath scattered, and will gather again, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.[2] He will yet be so to all the tribes and kindreds likewise of the Gentile dispersion. For He is the

[1] Matt. 24: 40, 41. [2] Jer. 31: 10.

true 'Shiloh, and unto Him shall the gathering of the peoples be.'[1] But especially, brethren, on the day of His coming again, the cloud of glory, on which He descends, will be the rendezvous of His ransomed and aspiring Church. 'He shall send His angels . . . and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other.'[2] On the joy of that reunion was His own eye fixed even in the agonies of death. Jesus died, says John, when expounding the prophecy of Caiaphas, 'that He might gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.'[3] Glorious, indeed, dear brethren, will be that first meeting of 'the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven.'[4] Sundered they now are by time, and place, and partial affections, and mistaken interests, and the gates of death. But then—oh! then—they all come together, like 'doves to their windows,'[5] after the rain and storm. Or, like the many members of one loving family, after the toils, and cares, and temporary estrangements of a long and weary and anxious day, they meet and embrace—they rest and rejoice together—in their 'Father's house' of 'many mansions.'[6]

[1] Gen. 49 : 10 (עַמִּים. This may, however, denote the tribes of Israel. But see John 12 : 32).

[2] Matt. 24 : 31. [3] John 11 : 51, 52. [4] Heb. 12 : 23.
[5] Is. 60 : 8. [6] John 14 : 2.

LECTURE VII.

II. Thess. 2:3–8.—'Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.'

In our last Lecture I attempted to show you that the error, to which the Thessalonians were at this time exposed, was that of supposing that 'the day of the Lord'—that great object of their hope and desire, ever since their conversion from idolatry to the service of the living and true God—had actually arrived, and brought them no blessing.

You must not suppose, however, that any thing I have now to say depends on the correctness of our in-

terpretation of the second verse. The exposition I shall give of the verses just read, and of those that follow, is not in the least affected by that, but would be the same had we found ourselves at liberty to adopt the ordinary view of the writer's immediate object; namely, that he sought merely to assure his brethren that the consummation was not quite so close at hand as some were trying to make them believe. In either case let us see how Paul deals with the difficulty.

We all know how it would be dealt with in our day. Let any Christian man now get excited on the subject of the nearness of Christ's second advent, and with what confidence would he be told by the generality even of Christian teachers, that he need surely give himself no trouble on that score, inasmuch as we have not yet had the millennium—the thousand, or perhaps the three hundred and sixty thousand, years' universal triumph of the gospel—that, on the contrary, we are only at the commencement of the missionary era, whereby the reign of righteousness and peace shall at length be introduced. And who can deny that, if, indeed, the revealed purpose of God is, that the latter-day glory shall precede the Lord's return, this answer is not more satisfactory than it is natural and obvious? But is it Paul's answer? That is our present concern.

'*Let no one*,' he says, be his standing and reputation in the Church what they may—'*let no one deceive you in any way*'[1]—in any one of the ways mentioned in the

[1] Μή τις . . . κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον.

preceding verse, or in any other:—'*for* that day shall not come'—there is nothing for this, you perceive, in the original; but evidently some such clause is to be supplied, and the omission of it is, perhaps, best explained by Bengel as an illustration of the Apostle's delicate regard to the feelings of his readers: 'He speaks gently, abstaining from words, which one that loved Christ's advent would not willingly hear.'[1] But to proceed: 'That day shall not come, *unless*[2] *there come*'—what? the millennium first? no—'*a falling away first;*' literally, *the apostasy*[3] *first;* for that is the very term employed, and in using it the Apostle speaks as of something already known to the church. It may likewise be assumed, that he had reference, not, as has been sometimes supposed, to some political revolt, but to a momentous defection from the Christian faith.[4] First, therefore, the apostasy, and the revelation of the Man of Sin; and then, but not before, the Lord will come for the destruction of His impious rival. That being one main purpose of His coming, and the Man of Sin not having yet appeared, it is absolutely certain that your present alarm is altogether visionary and vain. Such is plainly the argument of our text.

And it is surely not less obvious that, as Paul drops not a hint of any millennium prior to the Lord's ad-

[1] 'Leniter loquitur; abstinet verbis, quæ non libenter audiret amator adventus Christi.'

[2] ἐὰν μή.

[3] ἡ ἀποστασία.

[4] In this religious sense the word is often used by the Septuagint. See 2 Chron. 29: 19; Jer. 29: 32; &c.

vent, so what he does say is irreconcilable with that theory, unless, indeed, our hope for the world is limited to a millennium during which Antichrist reigns!

But what apostasy is it that is here referred to? And who is this Man of Sin? That we may be the better able to judge of the different answers that have been given to these questions, let us carefully scan the dark features of this terrible image, which Christ's Apostle, standing in the bright, Pentecostal morn of Christianity, already saw casting a baleful shadow across the heavens, and lifting looks of proud defiance even in the temple of God. Favour me, then, with your best attention, as I go over the whole passage with only a few words of running commentary, and such modifications of the version as a critical accuracy may seem to require.

'That day shall not come, *unless there come the apostasy first*'—of which I have so often spoken to you—'*and there be revealed*[1] *the man of sin*'—the man whose very nature and essence, and the breath of his nostrils, is sin, all sin, nothing but sin,[2]—'*the son of perdition*'—that being, no less than sin, his characteristic; not so much that he leads others into perdition,[3] as that he goes thither himself, as to the portion of his inheritance—'his own place,' as was said of that disciple of the

[1] καὶ ἀποκαλυφθῇ.

[2] For other examples of this Hebrew idiom, see in the original Ps. 5:6; Is. 53:3; 55:7; &c.

[3] As Schleusner and Pelt explain the phrase. Several others (as Theodoret, Bengel, Olshausen) would combine the two ideas.

Lord, into whom, though one of the twelve, 'Satan entered,' and who, bearing the same awful designation, may be regarded as a type of the great future adversary ;[1]—'*who opposeth*'—this being none other than 'the Antichrist'[2]—'*and exalteth*,' or *uplifteth*, '*himself above*,' or *against*, '*every one called God, or an object of worship ;*'[3] not merely against 'every so-called god'[4] of the heathen, but against the true God as well ; against whatever, Divine or human, has hitherto challenged the adoration and obedience of mankind ;—'*so that he in the temple of God, as God*[5] *sitteth, showing*

[1] John 13 : 27 ; Acts 1 : 25 ; Rev. 17 : 8, 11. For this idiom, compare Is. 57 : 4 ; Eph. 2 : 2 ; 1 Thess. 5 : 5 ; &c.

[2] 1 John 2 : 18, ὁ ἀντίχριστος. The absolute construction of ὁ ἀντικείμενος is better than to connect it by zeugma with ἐπὶ πάντα—this verb in the New Testament being always followed by a dative.

[3] ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον Θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα. Our translators and the older English versions apparently follow the Vulgate *omne quod*= πᾶν τό, which, however, I find in no printed text but that of Beza ; and there it is avowedly for no reason except that Jerome might seem to have read it, and that in Beza's own opinion it yields a richer sense. —σέβασμα occurs again in Acts 17 : 23, where our version mistranslates it, as Conybeare does here: 'against all *worship*.' The word, says Olshausen, 'signifies every thing holy, as an object of worship, whether a person, an idol, or a place (Acts 17 : 23).' Here the first reference —to persons—is to be preferred ; not, however, for Olshausen's reason, viz. because 'the article is not repeated' (there being no article in the case), but on account of the prominence throughout the verse of the idea of a personal hostility.

[4] Peile. Compare 1 Cor. 8 : 5. In the present case 'λεγόμενον (*called*) is naturally added,' says Lünemann, 'by Christian awe, since for the Christian mind πάντα θεὸν (*every God*) were nonsense and blasphemy.'

[5] The words ὡς Θεόν are cancelled by Griesbach and the latest editors.

himself forth that he is God.' Such is the arrangement of the words in the original, which strikingly represents, first, Antichrist's intrusion[1] into the peculiar dwelling-place[2] of God; then, his usurping session there; and, lastly, his blasphemous ostentation,[3] while thus enthroned. But whether Paul, when he wrote these words, was thinking of the temple at Jerusalem, or of the Christian Church as the 'habitation of God through the Spirit,'[4] cannot be safely determined from the words themselves.

The Apostle now reminds his brethren, that all this was no new revelation either for him or them. '*Remember ye not*'—(it is strange that any of you should be thus perplexed)—'*that, when I was yet with you*'—during those few[5] memorable weeks, which surely neither you nor I can ever forget—'*I told you these things*'—*was in the habit of telling*[6] you them? For the allusion is not to any particular discourse. In the instruction even of these young converts, the appalling development of evil within the Church, and the consequent fiery trial of the faithful in the times preceding the Lord's advent, had been familiar topics of apostolic address. Those solemn warnings of Christ Himself may have been quoted: 'Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. . . . I am come in my

[1] *εἰς*. [2] *ναός*. See Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, § 3.
[3] *ἀποδεικνύντα ἑαυτόν*. [4] Eph. 2 : 22.
[5] Perhaps not more than three or four. [6] *ἔλεγον*.

Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.'[1] And authoritative expositions, it is very probable, were given of Daniel's wonderful old prophecies of the Little Horn, that came up among the ten horns of the fourth beast, and had 'eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things;' and of the Wilful King who should 'exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and should speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and should prosper till the indignation be accomplished.'[2]

Certain it is from the sixth verse, that on this momentous theme, lightly as it is now regarded by most, the earliest lessons, which the church of Thessalonica had from her inspired founder, included details that are here simply referred to as well understood by her members, and our ignorance of which is one chief source of embarrassment to the modern interpreter. '*And now ye know what withholdeth, that he may be revealed*'—not too soon, but—'*in his time*'—*his own time*[3]—that appropriated to him by God, in whose ordination there is a set time for every thing—for the evil, as for the good—for the revelation of Antichrist, and for his overthrow, even as for Immanuel's own birth, and death, and future glorious epiphany.[4]

But the need of a restraining influence of some kind,

[1] Matt. 24: 11, 12; John 5: 43. [2] Dan. 7: 8, 25; 11: 36.

[3] τῷ ἑαυτοῦ καιρῷ.

[4] Rev. 17: 17; Gal. 4: 4; John 7: 30; 8: 20; 1 Tim. 6: 14, 15. See page 273.

to prevent the Man of Sin's premature manifestation in the apostolic age, implies the existence even then of tendencies to that result. And so it is added: '*For the mystery is already working of lawlessness*'—as the clause[1] might better be rendered. According to a Scriptural definition, sin of every kind is essentially lawlessness.[2] But this its intrinsic, unchangeable character and import will come, it would appear, to a more conscious, deliberate, open assertion in the breaking of bands, and the casting away of cords, in the consummate evil of the last days. '*Already*,' however, '*the mystery of lawlessness*,' in malignant counteraction of 'the mystery of godliness,'[3] was working—working as a mystery,[4] or hidden leaven, not yet fully revealed, though the tokens of its presence were manifold, and not to be mistaken.

We are apt, I think, to cherish somewhat exaggerated notions respecting the condition of the primitive churches. How large a portion of the apostolic writings is taken up in rebukes, and protests against the various forms of evil that appeared in one or another, if not in all, of them!—as their strifes and envyings—their spirit of faction, and resistance to apostolic authority—their uncleanness and disorders—their heresies and will-worship—their contempt and oppression of the poor—the deceitful handling of the word

[1] τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας.

[2] 1 John 3 : 4. The word is the same as here.

[3] 1 Tim. 3 : 16.

[4] This idea is more readily suggested by the Greek order, as represented above.

of God by such as made a gain of godliness, and 'taught things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake'[1]—and other like offences against the truth and law of the gospel. In a tone of deepest sadness Paul refers to his 'perils among false brethren,'[2] and cannot think without weeping of the walk of many, who, in the guise of discipleship, showed themselves to be 'enemies of the cross of Christ.' To the Philippians (2 : 21) he laments, that 'all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.' And in his latest Epistle—the Second to Timothy—he complains again and again of a general abandonment of Paul the aged: 'This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia turned away from me. . . . At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me.'[3] And just so the last survivor of the apostolic college, the venerable John, looked, with an eye still bright with 'an unction from the Holy One,' on the 'many antichrists' that then swarmed in Christendom, and, as with his dying breath, he renewed the warning against the 'many deceivers' that had 'entered into the world.' Nay, he himself was disowned and repelled by Diotrephes, who 'loved to have the preëminence' among the brethren.[4]

All this, then, betrayed the working of '*the mystery of lawlessness*,' in the very presence of the Apostles. Their Epistles, moreover, abundantly show how clearly they

[1] Tit. 1 : 11 ; 1 Tim. 6 : 5 ; &c. [2] 2 Cor. 11 : 26.

[3] Philem. 9 ; 2 Tim. 1 : 15 (this points to some particular occasion; *ἀπεστράφησαν*) ; 4 : 16.

[4] 1 John 2 : 18, 20 : 2 John 7 ; 3 John 9.

foresaw, that 'after their departing' it would 'increase unto more ungodliness.'[1] Indeed, one of the most striking things about the Epistles is the number of full-length portraits they contain, without counting the slighter sketches, of what Paul here calls the coming apostasy. Compare 1 Tim. 4 : 1–3 ; 2 Tim. 3 : 1–9, 13 ; 4 : 3, 4 ; 2 Pet. 2. 3 : 3–5 ; Jude.

This whole movement, nevertheless, so far as it had yet gone, and as compared with the audacity of its maturity, was of a secret and stealthy character, and such as confessed the operation and control of some powerful hindrance and check. To this repressive influence allusion had just been made, as to something that did not require explanation. When now again introduced, it is in the form of a living, personal agent: '*The mystery is already working of lawlessness, until only he, who withholdeth for the present*,[2] *be taken out of the way ; and then*'—at the time appointed, without further evasion or delay—'*shall be revealed the Lawless One*,[3] *whom the*

[1] Acts 20 : 29 ; 2 Tim. 2 : 16, 17.

[2] *μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἕως κτλ.* Our Translators adopted from the Genevan version and the Bishops' Bible one of several elliptical constructions that have been given of this clause. They are none of them so simple and satisfactory as that, which makes *ὁ κατέχων* the immediate subject of *γένηται*, and regards it as set prominently forward, for the sake of emphasis, by a rhetorical inversion of the natural order. Compare Gal. 2 : 10 (Greek).—The unfortunate variation in the rendering of *τὸ κατέχον—ὁ κατέχων* is also borrowed from the older versions.

[3] *ὁ ἄνομος.* The arrangement of verses 7 and 8 is that, which best brings out the opposition between the present secret operation of lawlessness as a principle, and its future manifestation as embodied in the Lawless One ; the only barrier between the two being *ὁ κατέχων* (*the Withholder*).

Lord'—or, as most editors [1] now read, *the Lord Jesus*—'*shall consume with the breath* [2] *of His mouth*,' as insects wither on the mere approach of fire,[3] '*and shall destroy with the appearing* [4] *of His coming*'—not the '*brightness*,' but as it were the first gleaming dawn, of His advent.[5] When the Man of sorrows, you recollect, confronted in Gethsemane those who, led by Judas, the typical antichrist, sought His life, 'they went backward and fell to the ground.'[6] So shall it be in the last days of the Church's humiliation. For the discomfiture of *the* Antichrist—that most formidable emissary and instrument of Satan—it will suffice for Christ, in the very hour and power of darkness, to 'show Himself.'[7] 'It is enough,' says Chrysostom, 'that He be present, and all these things perish. He will stay the deception, simply by appearing.'[8]

As to whether this consumption and this destruction are two separate processes, or two expressions of one and the same process, that also is a point that will be judged of rather according to the general interpretation of the prophecy, than from the verbal criticism of this particular verse.

But what coming is here meant? I dare say, my hearers, if you have followed the course of the exposi-

[1] Not Tischendorf. [2] *πνεύματι*.
[3] Chrysostom's illustration. [4] *ἐπιφανείᾳ*.
[5] Bengel: 'prima ipsius adventus emicatio.'
[6] John 18: 6. [7] Ps. 94: 1. See on ch. 1: 9.
[8] *ἀρκεῖ παρεῖναι αὐτὸν, καὶ ταῦτα πάντα ἀπόλωλε. στήσει την ἀπάτην, καὶ φανεὶς μόνον.*

tion with any ordinary measure of attention, you think the question a strange and needless one. 'What coming,' you will ask, 'can be meant, but the one spoken of all through these two Epistles? the coming, a mistake in regard to—not the nature, but—the time of which was now endangering the peace of the Church, insomuch that from the beginning of this chapter the Apostle has been labouring expressly for the correction of that very mistake. But the only coming the Thessalonians were thus concerned about was the great, second, personal coming of the Lord to judgment. Of course, then, no writer of common sense and fairness, to say nothing of higher qualities, would so mock the anxieties of his brethren, while pretending to relieve them, as, without giving them the least intimation that he was now going to use the word with quite a different reference, to slide off into talk of what the Lord would do at some other kind of coming, providential or spiritual, that was not at all in question.'

Such, probably, would be your ready reflections in regard to any shuffling of this kind; and assuredly they are my own. Nor, from among the numberless tricks and subterfuges of religious controversy, can I recall one more thoroughly discreditable, than that of making the coming of this eighth verse something or any thing but what the Apostle so plainly intended, and what those to whom the Epistle was addressed could not but understand him to mean. And all for what? For no other reason, brethren, than this; that, what with the mystery

of lawlessness already working in the apostolic age, and the apostasy that was thereupon to ensue, and then the revelation of the Man of Sin himself, emerging from that apostasy, and 'prospering and practising'[1] till the Lord come, it is clearly impossible, if that coming be the second coming, to thrust in any millennium on this side of it.

Before leaving the matter, though I trust you now sufficiently understand it, yet since the point is one of the highest interest, and has been so often misinterpreted, you will allow me just to notice the curious fact, that, as if for the purpose of precluding the possibility of any such perversion of apostolic language and logic, there really is not in all the New Testament another phrase that so emphatically expresses the idea of a personal coming, as the one before us. It so happens that it is made up of two words, either one of which is found able to convey that idea everywhere else.

Thus, the latter[2] of the two—that rendered '*coming*' —invariably denotes the actual presence of that, of which it is asserted, and, when used of a person, as uniformly implies his personal presence. No one doubts that this is true of all the other six instances,[3] in which it occurs in our Epistles, and one of those instances is in the beginning of this chapter, where the writer states the subject that he is still discussing.

In like manner, the other term here employed is found in five other places in the New Testament, in all of which

[1] Dan. 8: 24. [2] *παρουσία.*
[3] 1 Thess. 2: 19; 3: 13; 4: 15; 5: 23; 2 Thess. 2: 1, 9.

it is translated *appearing;* and in one of those places it is used of our Saviour's first advent; in the other four, of His second.[1]

Unless, therefore, the more pains Paul is at to assert a thing, the less we are to believe it, we may safely conclude that, when he affirms of the 'Man of Sin, the son of perdition'—whoever he may be—that the Lord shall '*destroy him*'—not, with His appearing; that would have been enough—not, with His coming; that too would have been enough—but '*with the appearing of His coming*,' the only meaning possible is that Antichrist shall last till the Lord's return from heaven, and shall then perish in Christ's own presence, and, so to speak, by His avenging hand. And then, since the Man of Sin himself had not yet been revealed, it was obviously a most vain thing for any to disquiet themselves with apprehensions about the day of the Lord having come.

Having reached this point, the writer perhaps might have been expected to pause, or pass on to another theme. Instead of that, he immediately turns at the ninth verse to complete the portrait of the Man of Sin, as if for the purpose of giving his brethren the fuller assurance, that thus far there had been no manifestation of this last and greatest of the foes of Christ and His people. But time will not allow us to pursue the sub-

[1] 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 1:10; 4:1, 8; Tit. 2:13. In our text the English version follows the Bishops' Bible. Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan have *appearance.*

ject farther at present. Let me only, in conclusion, ask you to observe that the verses, which we have now examined, furnish very strong motives at once for humiliation and caution, and for gratitude and joy.

It may well humble us, and put us on our guard, to find in the Church of God, at all periods of her history, this continual tendency to declension and apostasy. Surely nothing but God's own unchangeable purpose and almighty grace will account for her inextinguishable life, or the preservation of any single soul. Let us, dear brethren, keep near the mercy-seat, and walk softly before Him.

Here, for example, was a church gathered by the ministry of the 'very chiefest'[1] Apostle, and by him most carefully instructed in what pertains to the coming of the Lord in the glory of His kingdom, and that blessed hope becomes her peculiar joy. But how soon, after his leaving her, does she forget his instructions, lose sight of the Divine plan, and is in danger of falling into most disastrous error on that very topic! Deem it not an impossible thing, that, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, *our* views also on that topic may be be found to differ essentially from those which Paul taught. Nay, I must not conceal my solemn conviction, that, in regard to the time and purposes of our Lord's second advent, modern professors generally are as far astray, though in the opposite direction, as the Thessalonians ever were. In some respects our mistake is

[1] 2 Cor. 11 : 5.

even more perilous than theirs. Waiting and longing, as they did, for the day of Christ, they may have given too ready an ear to deceptive reports of its arrival, while they knew it not, and then they could not fail to be indeed greatly disturbed. We, on the other hand, having succeeded to our own satisfaction in putting off that day to a far, far distant future, naturally enough concern ourselves very little about it, and have taken to making the best of the present evil world. If we do not openly join the scoffers who say: 'Where is the promise of His coming?'[1] yet in our dreams of universal political and social amelioration, and of the world's conversion, we are, alas, but poorly prepared to meet that 'hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.'[2] May the good Lord fulfil to us His most gracious word, and 'keep' us all from that hour!

But I said there was comfort here, as well as warning. Our heavenly Father has not sought to hide from His children the things that are coming on the earth. And what a joy is it to be assured, that our whole future as individuals, and the whole future of the Church, are alike under the regulation of His wisdom and love! The times and the seasons of the evil and the good are all of His appointment, and in His power. However long, and with whatever craft and energy, the mystery of lawlessness may work—however extensively

[1] 2 Pet. 3 : 4. [2] Rev. 3 : 10.

the apostasy may prevail—the Man of Sin must wait till '*his own*' allotted '*time*' arrive, before he can tread the stage of his impious triumph ;—triumph fierce and terrible, while it lasts, but having also its bounds, which it cannot pass. For, lo, we read again, that 'in His own times' God 'shall send Jesus Christ,'[1] and that hand, which for our sakes was nailed to the cross, shall lay the Usurper low, and over his sudden, flaming fall the emancipated earth and the insulted heavens shall exult together.

[1] 1 Tim. 6 : 15 (*καιροῖς ἰδίοις*) ; Acts 3 : 20.

LECTURE VIII.

II. THESS. 2:9–12.—'*Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.'

THE Apostle here resumes the dark and terrible theme of the previous verses. The details which are now added respecting the operations and temporary success of 'the Man of Sin, the son of perdition,' not only tended to allay the present agitation at Thessalonica, by enabling the believers there to conclude with still greater certainty, that nothing fairly answering to this description of one of the necessary precursors of the Lord's advent had yet been seen. They were fitted to be no less useful in furnishing the means of Antichrist's identification, and in establishing the Church of God against his seductions, whensoever he should appear.

Observe, then, that his coming was to be in some re-

spects a sort of infernal caricature of that of Christ Himself. '*Whose coming*,' says Paul—his entire coming; his spirit, and aims, and measures throughout—'*is after the working*,' or *according to the energy*, '*of Satan*.'[1] There will in this case be more than the manifestation of a human depravity. As the Church is the 'body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all,' and in her God shows 'the exceeding greatness of His power,'[2] so in Antichrist, Satan's masterpiece, will Satan, so to speak, exhaust himself, putting forth through him all his own resources of strength and skill, and that in both spheres of his operation, the external and the spiritual.

'*With all power and signs and wonders of falsehood*.'[3] These various exhibitions of Satanic might will have this quality in common. Coming forth from him who 'is a liar, and the father of it,'[4] they will partake of his character, and will aim at the promotion of his kingdom of lies. But we are by no means to infer from this, that they will be nothing more than juggler's tricks or optical delusions. Impossible as it is to conceive of any natural law being truly for an instant suspended, except by His will who originally established it, and while, therefore, it may be safely asserted that no genuine miracle ever was, or ever can be, wrought for the con-

[1] *κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ Σατανᾶ*. These words the German versions and commentaries generally treat as a mere explanatory or parenthetical appendage to what they regard as the main predicate, *ἐστιν ἐν πάσῃ κτλ.*: '*whose coming is* (*according to the energy of Satan*) *with all power*,' &c. But in this construction, while it has no advantage in point of grammar, there is a serious damage to the sense.

[2] Eph. 1: 19, 23; 3: 20; &c. [3] *τέρασι ψεύδους*. [4] John 8: 44.

firmation of a falsehood,[1] yet, on the other hand, we have no reason to doubt that, were the spirits of darkness suffered, for whatever holy ends of the Divine wisdom, to exert in the material world, and before the eyes of men, their own natural faculties, the merely physical results might be such as we should find ourselves unable to discriminate from the miraculous; just as the ignorant have often been bewildered and appalled by the experiments of a scientific superiority.

It is, therefore, a very great and perilous mistake, to regard the wonderful and inexplicable as any adequate test of the truth of doctrine. Against this snare the people of God have been solemnly warned under both dispensations. 'If,' said Moses, 'there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God proveth you, . . . and that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death.'[2] And so our Lord, speaking of the 'false Christs and false prophets' that were to arise, distinctly affirms that they

[1] I do not forget the case of Pharaoh's magicians. But even granting that, in their first attempts to counterwork the servants of God, their success was as real as it seemed to be, it must be considered that those feats were only the commencement of a process of trial, that was not meant to stop there, but was to go steadily forward, and presently to issue in utter and confessed discomfiture.

[2] Deut. 13 : 1–5.

should 'show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect.'[1] In the Apocalypse, accordingly, this very thing met the eye of the Seer again and again. 'And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth. . . . And he doeth great wonders'—or *signs;* for it is the same word[2] so rendered in our text—'so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles'—or *signs;* still the same word—'which he had power to do.'[3] And finally under the sixth vial, as the world-drama hastens to its catastrophe, 'the spirits of devils working miracles'—or *of demons, doing signs*—are seen 'going forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.'[4] So that there are not wanting abundant testimonies of Scripture to confirm the announcement here made, that the coming of the Man of Sin shall be '*with all power and signs and wonders of falsehood.*'

He does not, however, rely for success altogether on these outward prodigies. It is added: '*and with all deceitfulness*[5] *of unrighteousness*'—deceitfulness springing from unrighteousness, and, under whatever specious dis-

[1] Matt. 24:24. [2] σημεῖα. [3] Rev. 13:11, 13, 14.

[4] Rev. 16:14 (πνεύματα δαιμόνων ποιοῦντα σημεῖα).

[5] ἀπάτῃ. Our older writers often use *deceivable* and *deceivableness* in this active sense. Nor is there any reason for supposing (as Scholefield does, and as Alford seems to do), that our Translators, in retaining here what they found in previous versions, meant any thing else.

guises, working toward unrighteous issues. 'Speaking lies in hypocrisy'—'by good words and fair speeches deceiving the hearts of the simple'[1]—an insinuating plausibility, a bland address, and smooth persuasiveness—pretensions even to higher forms of truth, a purer and more rigorous morality, and a more expansive benevolence—such have ever been among the most familiar artifices of errorists. Like the serpent, when, as described by the poet, he first accosted Eve :—

> '. . . . With tract oblique
> 'At first, as one who sought access, but fear'd
> 'To interrupt, side-long they work their way.'[2]

'And no marvel ; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.'[3] And so the Man of Sin, his mightiest minister, the great Satanic wonder-worker, was to be a no less complete embodiment of Satanic craft, and this in all probability combined with the highest measure of natural gifts and accomplishments.

But now let us see what is here said of his victims :—'*with all deceitfulness of unrighteousness in those who are perishing*.'[1] As our Lord taught that, in the times

Even now Trench (*English Past and Present*, New York edition, p. 136) writes thus: 'Words that have changed their meaning have often a certain deceivableness about them.'

[1] 1 Tim. 4 : 2; Rom. 16 : 18. [2] Milton, *Par. Lost*, ix. 510–2.
[3] 2 Cor. 11 : 14, 15.

[1] ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις. The ἐν (*in*) is now frequently omitted,

preceding His advent, nothing but the almighty grace of Divine election would preserve any from the snares of evil, and, as one sure sign of perdition is blindness to the glory of the gospel,[1] so another is, to fall under the spell of Antichrist. He sits in the temple of God, and there displays his pomp and his wonders before *all* the worshippers. But it is only the perishing that he succeeds in deceiving; and the reasons of this success immediately follow, as they exist on man's part, and on God's.

The whole case is explained as one of righteous retribution. Antichrist's power of deception is the legitimate consequence of men's previous treatment of the truth—God's saving truth. '*Because*'—literally, *for that*,[2] in strict requital; their fate, awful as it is, is a just *quid pro quo*—'*they received not the love of the truth*'—it was offered to them, but they *did not accept*[3] it—'*that they might be saved.*' Not only did they hate and reject the truth; they resisted and quenched every gracious influence, by which God sought to subdue their enmity. '*The truth*' revealed a Saviour, and brought His salvation near. Nothing more was needed

leaving what is then commonly construed as a dative of disadvantage: *for the perishing.* By many also, who retain it, it is translated *among*, and connected with the beginning of the 9th verse: *whose coming is among*, &c.

[1] Matt. 24: 24; 2 Cor. 4: 3 (where the very same phrase occurs: *in those who are perishing*).

[2] *ἀνθ' ὧν.* Compare Acts 12: 23.

[3] *οὐκ ἐδέξαντο.* See on 1 Thess. 1: 6; 2: 13.

to save them, than they should love and embrace that truth. They did not embrace it, because they did not love it. The truth made manifest their ruin and helplessness; it reproved, humbled, warned, and they *would* not love it, but regarded it, and repelled it, as an irksome presence—a hostile intruder.

'*And for this cause*'—on account of their perverse, obstinate opposition to the truth—'*God shall send*[1] *them strong delusion*'—*a working* or *energy of delusion*[2]—'*that they should believe a lie*,' or rather, *that they may believe—in order to their believing—the falsehood*[3]—the falsehood, namely, that the Man of Sin is striving to introduce. The reference may be to the 'power and signs and wonders of falsehood' mentioned in the 9th verse;[4] or perhaps to that characteristic lie of Antichrist, in 'showing himself forth that he is God,' in which the Satanic promise in the garden, 'Ye shall be as gods,'[5] may be considered as finding its last and highest, but still appropriate—that is to say, lying—fulfilment.

But the main thing to be noticed here is, that God will send the Antichristian lie, that the haters and refusers of His truth may believe that. This, you perceive, is what the verse quite plainly asserts. Very many shrink from it, however, and would fain have the

[1] Several recent editors read *πέμπει, is sending.*

[2] *ἐνέργειαν πλάνης.* [3] *εἰς τὸ πιστεύσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψεύδει.*

[4] Compare the definite reference of *ὁ ψεύστης, the liar,* in 1 John 2 : 22, to the abstract *ὁ ψεῦδος, lie,* of the previous verse.

[5] Gen. 3 : 5.

words represent the faith in Antichrist as simply the *result* of God's—not sending, but—permitting Antichrist to appear and work, rather than as what was distinctly included in the Divine *purpose*. But all such attempts at mending Scripture, under pretense of saving the Divine honour, are as silly as they are unbecoming. They effect nothing that is worth the trouble. Certainly it will not be denied, that God at least knew what the result was going to be of the revelation of the Man of Sin. Why, then—it might still be objected by those who take pleasure in citing the Infinite One to the bar of their puny reason—why does He suffer that revelation? Why is the Withholder taken out of the way? Why is not the great Deceiver crushed while yet in embryo, instead of being finally let loose upon a helpless race, utterly unable to cope with his delusions?

No real difficulty, therefore, is avoided by these mollifying processes, and Scripture throughout disowns them. According to our Apostle, this child of hell comes to execute on earth a judicial, punitive, Divine mission. Paul does not say, that God compels any man to believe in Him; but he does say that, in lifting the veil that hides the Antichrist, one of God's designs is to begin to avenge the wrong already done to 'the truth,' by showing that in the free, spontaneous exercise of a depraved nature, the wilful despisers of His own saving grace will yield ready credence to the lie of the cruel and treacherous Blasphemer.

And yet another and ulterior design is presented in

the 12th verse: '*That all may be*'—not '*damned;*' the original word[1] very rarely, if ever, means that. In the cases, where this idea of condemnation and punishment has been attached to it, it is rather an inference from the context, or from the known character of the object, than what the verb properly expresses, or of itself implies. Perhaps the utmost that it anywhere means is the act of separating, discerning, discriminating, and so adjudging, according to the truth of each particular case. And just so here: '*that all may be judged*'—of course, according to their character and deserts, as these have been exhibited, and are now again summed up—'*who believed not the truth, but*'—not merely believed the falsehood; not merely gave themselves up willing captives of the infernal delusion; but did that, because they loved sin—'*had pleasure in unrighteousness.*'

The whole, then, is just as if it had been said:—Men hate the truth, which God sends to them for their salvation, and even refuse to be reconciled to it. He then, and therefore, instead of destroying them at once, takes measures to bring out all the sin and madness of their hearts; and this, in order to their being ultimately brought into judgment, when He shall be justified in His speaking, and shall be clear in His judging.[2] In other words, God's purpose is, by means of an extreme manifestation of human wickedness, to draw forth and vindicate the declaration of the Divine judgment.

[1] κρίνω. [2] Eccl. 11:9; Ps. 51:4.

'When judged,' says Augustine[1]—judged, that is, for rejecting the truth—'when judged, they shall be seduced ; and when seduced, they shall be judged.'

We have thus, brethren, reviewed with some care the terms of this great prophecy, and should now be better prepared, if not to frame a positive theory for ourselves as to the real import of the whole, at least to form an opinion of the comparative value of the views that have been advanced by others. These are very various and discordant, nor would it serve any good purpose to attempt here any thing like an exhaustive detail.[2] But it will not require many words to give you a general idea of the more prominent classes of interpretation.

1. There are those, in the first place, among the modern Germans especially,[3] who make short and easy work of the matter by stripping the passage of all serious prophetic authority, and treating it as a fanciful expression merely, in a form suggested by the writer's Jewish education, of his own personal feelings and forebodings at the time ;—a hypothesis of which it is quite enough to say, that no one who believes in the inspiration of the Scriptures can feel much interest in it.

2. Then, secondly, there is a number of expositions, less offensive in principle, but almost equally futile,

[1] *De Civ. Dei.* xx. 19. 4.—'Judicati seducentur, et seducti judicabuntur.'

[2] The best synopsis is that given by Lünemann, and adopted by Alford.

[3] De Wette, Lünemann, &c.

which, allowing the prophetical character of the description, restricts its application to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and to persons and principles and events that preceded that catastrophe. As to the latter particulars scarcely two of this class of interpreters[1] agree; but their variations need not be recounted, since all of them concur in the impossible reference, to the calamity just mentioned, of the coming of the Lord spoken of in the 8th verse.

3. In the third place, there is what may be called the Protestant interpretation, as being that which prevails in the Reformed churches, and which was loudly proclaimed by the Reformers themselves, though traces of it abound likewise among the reforming parties of the middle ages. As commonly explained—(for here also there are partial divergencies)—it embraces these points:—'*The apostasy*' is the widespread papal departure from the evangelical faith and worship. '*The Man of Sin—the Son of perdition—the Lawless One*'—is the papal hierarchy, with the Pope himself at its head. '*The temple of God*' in which Antichrist sits is the Christian Church. '*That which hindered*'[2] his untimely revelation was the existence and power of the Roman Empire; and '*he who hindered*,'[3] or withheld, was the Emperor. The *consumption* of Antichrist '*by the breath of the Lord's mouth*,' and his final *destruction*

[1] Grotius, Hammond, Whitby, &c.

[2] τὸ κατέχον. [3] ὁ κατέχων.

'*by the appearing of the Lord's coming*,' is the gradual wasting, and ultimate extinction, of Popery by the preaching of the pure gospel; though Calvin and many others do not fail to perceive and acknowledge, that the latter and more complete result must be reserved to illustrate the second advent, at the time of the restitution of all things.

It will surely not be denied by any one, who has studied the history and character of the Papacy, that this Protestant scheme, at least with Calvin's modification of the last point, is able to sustain itself by many and strong arguments. Indeed, the only question is, whether we should be justified in saying that it is the full and absolute truth on the subject. And there I am not without serious doubts, suggested by the following considerations:—

(1) There seems to be an unfair limitation in the view, as stated above, in that it makes no account either of the grievous delinquencies of the great Greek Church—though some of the Reformers, it may be mentioned in passing, did recognize in Mahomet and Mahometanism the existence of an Eastern Antichrist—or of the many antichrists overrunning Protestantism itself.

(2) Then I do not see how, without some measure of polemical exaggeration, the Pope can be said fully to realize the apostolic description of the Man of Sin. The resemblance, no doubt, is a startling one; but a near and close scrutiny does not confirm the first impression

of identity. Thus, the prophecy[1] speaks apparently of an open lawlessness, a defiant infidelity, and an undisguised blasphemy, such as Popery thus far cannot in fairness be charged with. Nor do her lying wonders and despicable impostures exhibit any such energy of Satan as might deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. Nor yet would we dare to class with the perishing all those who have drunk of her cup, and have been deceived by her sorceries.

(3) It may be added, that the spirit of the prophecy, as adapted to the occasion that called it forth, seems to require a much shorter interval between the revelation of Antichrist and that of his Destroyer, than this theory allows.

But if for these reasons we hesitate to affirm that Popery, apostate though she be, and in so many of her aspects antichristian, is the very Man of Sin, whose picture has hung here for these eighteen centuries in the gallery of inspiration, where shall we look for him?

4. Now there is still another general view that has not yet been mentioned, and it possesses for us the greater interest, if not greater authority, as being that which prevailed in the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles, and for many ages after. Those holding it differed or doubted, it is true, respecting some of

[1] Compare 1 John 2:22: 'Who is the liar (*ὁ ψεύστης*), but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the Antichrist (*οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος*), who denieth the Father and the Son.'

the minor details;—as whether '*the mystery of lawlessness*' was the Emperor Nero, or the budding heresies of the time; whether '*the temple of God*' be a temple at Jerusalem, or the Church of Christ; and whether '*that which withholdeth*' was the grace of the Spirit, or His miraculous gifts, or God's decree, or, according to the common understanding, the Roman Empire. This last opinion it was, that led the early Christians to pray habitually for the continuance of that Empire, lest, on its downfall, the dreaded Antichrist should immediately appear. And, supposing it to be the correct opinion, then, as the writer takes it for granted that the hindrance shall be 'taken out of the way,' we can understand the apparent reserve and caution with which he alludes to it in a document, which was likely to fall under Rome's vigilant and jealous eye.

But while on this and the other points specified there was not, as I have said, entire unanimity among the old Fathers of the Church, they were for three centuries at least quite at one in understanding by 'the Man of Sin, the Son of perdition, the Lawless One'—not a system of falsehood and unrighteousness, nor a succession of individuals at the head of such a system, but, according to the most obvious and natural, though not the necessary, import of the language—some one man, the personal Antichrist, the recipient of all Satan's energy, in whom Satan should, so to speak, become incarnate, and thus bring to a decision the long-standing feud between himself and the woman's Seed. In his days was

to be the great—the last—tribulation of the Church. But three years and a half, as they reckoned the prophetic period, should be the limit of his reign; and 'then,' said they, 'the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father; and, casting Antichrist and his adherents into the lake of fire, will bring on for the righteous the times of the kingdom—the seventh day of holy rest.'[1]

On the whole, I incline to believe, from the best consideration I have been able to give to the prophecy before us, as well as from a comparison of it with other prophecies, that this ancient faith has in it elements of truth, that must be combined with the Protestant interpretation, before we can get at the full import of this Divine revelation.

And if so, then how solemn, dear brethren, is the prospect before us! The last—the subtlest—the mightiest—the most depraved—and, for a time, the most successful of all the Antichrists is still to appear in Christendom, and draw the whole world 'wondering after'[2] him! Deem it not 'impossible that humanity can ever come to such an entire rupture with God.'[3] Have we so soon forgotten the naked horrors of the

[1] Irenæus, *Adv. Haer.* 30. 4: 'Tum veniet Dominus de cœlis in nubibus, in gloria Patris, illum quidem et obedientes ei in stagnum ignis mittens: adducens autem justis regni tempora, hoc est requietionem, septimam diem sanctificatam.' [2] Rev. 13 : 3.

[3] De Wette: 'Indem die Menscheit sich niemals so *ganz* mit Gott in Zwiespalt setzen kann.'

first French revolution—that dread rehearsal, as it might be called, of Antichrist's Godless triumph? Behold, then, the many thousands, who in our own day have been drawn from gospel lands, across seas and continents, by the bestial lure of Mormonism! And the many tens of thousands, who in this favoured land of popular education, and multiplied Bibles, and Sabbath-schools, and Churches, have turned, alas, from the cross to puzzle over, and defile themselves with, the most wretched trivialities of a debasing so-called Spiritualism! And then tremble, O my hearers, lest ye too, while resisting and trifling with the saving truth, should be abandoned by God to the belief of a lie;—lest of you too it be said, as of Israel of old: 'My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.'[1]

The whole subject is, indeed, a sad commentary on the favourite modern gospel of human progress. But 'if it be said'—and here, in closing, I avail myself of the words of an eminent living interpreter[2]—'if it be said, that this is somewhat a dark view to take of the prospects of mankind, we may answer, first, that we are not speculating on the phenomena of the world, but we are interpreting God's word: secondly, that we believe in One in whose hands all evil is working for good,—with whom there are no accidents nor failures,—who is bringing out of all this struggle, which shall

[1] Ps. 81: 11, 12. [2] Alford.

mould and measure the history of the world, the ultimate good of man and the glorification of His boundless love in Christ: and thirdly, that no prospect is dark for those who believe in Him. For them all things are working together for good; and, in the midst of the struggle itself, they know that every event is their gain; every apparent defeat, real success; and even the last dread conflict, the herald of that victory, in which all who have striven on God's part shall have a glorious and everlasting share.'

LECTURE IX.

II. THESS. 2: 13–17.—'But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.'

FROM depicting the horror of the last Antichrist—his rise, characteristics, and doom—the writer here turns again rejoicing to speak of the glorious privileges of the faithful at Thessalonica—mingling, however, with his abundant thanksgivings on their account renewed exhortation and prayer. The transition is like passing from under the glare of some disastrous eclipse into the bright, unclouded, cheerful sunshine.

'*But we*'—we, the ministers of Christ, who have laboured together in the work of your evangelization[1] —'*are bound*'—we gladly feel and acknowledge the ob-

[1] The ἡμεῖς is emphatic.

ligation[1]—'*to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord*'[2]—the Lord Jesus—loved by Him with a love as faithful and enduring, as it has already shown itself to be fervent and disinterested. And then follows a glowing statement of the grounds of this apostolic thanksgiving.

'*Because God chose you from the beginning*'[3]—not, from the first preaching of the gospel in Macedonia, as some would explain it; but, from everlasting[4]—'before the foundation of the world,' as the same thing is expressed elsewhere. Everywhere, indeed, does our Apostle trace the whole scheme of human redemption, with all its blessed consequences here and hereafter, to God's 'own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.' So far, therefore, as the certainty of this truth is concerned, it matters nothing, my hearers, whether we understand it or not, or whether we like it or not. Scripture does teach, that there *is* such a thing as a Divine choice from among men—a 'purpose of God according to election,' and that 'not of works'—'not according to our works'[5]—not resting at all on any personal claims whatever, or superiority in any respect, of the objects of this choice. It is a law unto itself. The reasons of it are among the secret things of God. Paul saw the river of life gushing from beneath the throne; but its hidden

[1] As in ch. 1 : 3.

[2] Compare 1 Thess. 1 : 2, 4 (pages 49, 50, 53, 54).

[3] εἵλετο (or, as now read, εἵλατο) ὑμᾶς ὁ Θεὸς ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. See 1 John 1 : 1; 2 : 13.

[4] Rom. 9 : 11; 2 Tim. 1 : 9.

sources there he seems never once to have thought of exploring. Any attempt of the kind he would doubtless have rebuked as sternly, as he did the impious inference from the Divine sovereignty against human responsibility.[1] Nay, the Son of man Himself gives us no other explanation, as He looks up into the face of His Father, and exclaims: 'Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight.'[2] It cannot, then, be for our profit, to search any farther in that direction.

In the opposite direction, thank God! all is clear and open; as regards both the end for which God's people are chosen, and the means by which the choice accomplishes itself.

The end is salvation—salvation from sin, sorrow, death, and hell, and from the assaults and wiles of all enemies. 'God chose you from the beginning *to salvation*'—not merely to your present condition of outward Church privilege, or of spiritual attainment,[3] but to that perfected salvation which is the end of faith,[4] and which consists, according to the writer's own explanation in the next verse, in '*the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ;*'—the glory, not of which He is the author and bestower[5]—true as that also is—but, with which He Himself is glorified.[6] 'So different is

[1] Rom. 9: 20. [2] Matt. 11: 26. [3] Flatt, Peile, &c.
[4] 1 Pet. 1: 9. [5] So Benson, Pelt, &c.
[6] The parallel 1 Thess. 5: 9 is sufficient to set aside the interpretation: *that glory might be acquired for our Lord Jesus Christ* (so Chrysostom, Œcumenius, Theophylact, Castalio, Corn. a Lapide, &c.),

your portion,' the writer seems to say, 'from that of Antichrist and his guilty, deceived followers.'

But mark likewise the means, by which the eternal purpose of God advances to its own glorious end.

'God chose you from the beginning to salvation *through*'—literally, *in*—[1] '*sanctification of the Spirit.*' The 'chosen generation'—the heirs of this salvation—of so great glory—must needs be 'a holy nation.'[2] But in themselves they 'are all as an unclean thing.'[3] And therefore the Holy Spirit descends in His renewing power, to regenerate and sanctify them wholly;—a process and a result, you will observe, distinctly embraced in the decree of God's electing love. 'Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.' 'He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world'—not certainly because we were holy, but—'that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.' And with no less explicitness is the same view set forth by the Apostle Peter: 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit.'[4]

Lest, however, it should be supposed, that, while this

and that suggested by Eph. 1: 14 and 1 Pet. 2: 9: *that ye might be the glorious possession of our Lord Jesus Christ* (so nearly the Syriac, Luther, Calvin, Michaelis, Steiger, &c).

[1] Compare 1 Thess. 4: 7 (page 227). [2] 1 Pet. 2: 9. [3] Is. 64: 6.

[4] Rom. 8: 29; Eph. 1: 4; 1 Pet. 1: 2.—Some (Koppe, Macknight, Schott, &c.) understand the human spirit to be meant here; and others (Wakefield, Brown, Peile) would render, *a spiritual purification—separation—consecration.* But these inferior senses are not required by the mere absence of the Greek article.

necessary change is going forward, the subjects of it are altogether passive therein, it is added, as another means by which the Divine choice works, or as another element in which it moves, '*and belief of the truth.*' As the Divine Spirit is the Agent, so the Divine truth is the instrument which that Agent employs, in the regeneration of the sinner, and his subsequent sanctification. The unchangeable law on this subject was proclaimed in that prayer of Christ: 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.'[1] And it has been verified in the constant experience of the Church. But, of course, the truth itself can exert no saving influence whatever, except as it is understood and believed. It is said, accordingly, of those who become the prey of Antichrist, that they 'believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness,' and so they come at last to 'believe the falsehood.' It is just this same close connection—this same principle of action and reaction—between the faith of men and their moral character, that is exemplified also in the children of God.

And here again let it be remembered, their '*faith*[2] *of the truth*,' no less than the '*sanctification of the Spirit*,' was included in the eternal purpose. They were chosen to be saints; and they were chosen to be believers. Faith is 'the gift of God;'[3] and God does not scatter His gifts at random. As at Antioch in Pisidia, when

[1] John 17: 17.

[2] This is the only instance out of two or three hundred, in which our version renders πίστις, *belief*.

[3] Eph. 2: 8.

Paul preached Christ, so now and here—at all times and everywhere—'as many as are ordained to eternal life believe.'[1] Nor is this point overlooked by Peter in the context from which I have already quoted, and where he addresses his brethren as 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience'—to wit, 'the obedience of faith.'[2]

But since 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,'[3] it therefore follows immediately in the 14th verse: '*whereunto He called you by our gospel.*' Some[4] take this to mean, *to which salvation ye were called;* others,[5] *to which faith ye were called;* and others still,[6] *to which sanctification and faith ye were called.* But there is no reason why we should not extend the reference to all that, for which, whether as means or end, God had chosen the Thessalonians; and that, as we have already seen, comprehends faith, sanctification, and salvation. The last of these, indeed, is the leading idea and ultimate end, to which the others are but subsidiary; and therefore it is repeated and defined in the latter clause of the verse: '*to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*' But to all of them God effectually '*called*' the Thessalonians by what the Apostle here, as near the beginning of the First Epistle (1 : 5),

[1] Acts 13 : 48. [2] 1 Pet. 1 : 2; Rom. 16 : 26. [3] Rom. 10 : 17.
[4] Piscator, Benson, Bengel, Barnes, &c.
[5] Vatablus, Aretius, Cocceius, &c.
[6] Estius, Corn. a Lapide, Grotius, Whitby, Schott, De Wette, &c.

speaks of, with a fond consciousness of the dignity and endearment of his official relation to it, as '*our gospel.*' God, however, had caused His own voice to be heard in the glad tidings announced by Paul and his companions, and that alone made the message effectual to gracious and saving results. Reverently and thankfully did the hearers yield themselves to the heavenly call, when they felt that, in doing so, they 'accepted not men's word, but, as it is in truth, God's word.'[1] And thus it came to pass, that, 'whom God did predestinate, them He also called.'[2]

Such, then, was the high distinction and blessedness of this Christian church, as contrasted with the Antichristian apostasy. And what were her members to infer from it all? That they should 'continue in sin, that grace might abound'?[3] Or at least that, God having sufficiently provided for their salvation, they might safely dismiss from their minds all solicitude and care about the matter? There are those, you know, who think this a fair kind of reasoning from what are very plainly the apostolic premises. What the Apostle himself would have thought of it is equally obvious from the three remaining verses, where he at once betakes himself anew to exhortation and prayer.

'*Therefore, brethren*'—or, *So then,*[4] *brethren*—'*stand*

[1] 1 Thess. 2 : 13.

[2] Rom 8 : 30.—With these verses (13, 14) compare 1 Thess. 1 : 4; 4 : 7; 5 : 9; 2 Thess. 1 : 10, 12.

[3] Rom. 6 : 1. [4] ἄρα οὖν. See 1 Thess. 5 : 6 (p. 286).

fast.' So far from indulging in remissness or security because of this abundance of the Divine grace toward you, for that very reason '*stand fast.*' Give not way to these vain alarms and agitations (v. 2). Be not 'carried about with every wind of doctrine'[1]—every puff of evil suggestion—every temptation, however plausible, however violent. Yea, beset as you are by many adversaries, yet in the presence of all their terrors '*stand fast*'—in your faith of the truth, and in your visible consecration to the service and glory of Christ. Falling from these, you will at the same time lose 'the beginning of your confidence,' and will be 'moved away from the hope of the gospel.'[2] Only by standing, and 'working out your own salvation with fear and trembling,' can you 'make your calling and election sure.' But what an encouragement is it to work, to know that 'it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure'! 'Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.' In His strength stand fast, 'and, having done all, stand!' 'Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'[3]

In all this, brethren, you recognize nothing more

[1] Eph. 4 : 14. [2] Heb. 3 : 14; Col. 1 : 23.
[3] Phil. 2 : 12, 13; 2 Pet. 1 : 10; 3 : 17, 18; 1 John 4 : 4; Eph. 6 : 13.

than the uniform style and pervading spirit of apostolic exhortation ;—so little were these inspired men troubled by any thought or feeling of conflict or inconsistency between the absolute sovereignty, the necessity and efficiency of Divine grace and the obligations of Christian duty.

The two errors on this subject are these :—One man asserts the need of continual watchfulness and prayer, that we enter not into temptation, and go back unto perdition ; but he thinks that, to do that logically and effectively, he must deny the doctrine of God's eternal and unchangeable election. Clearly right as he is in the former opinion and practice, he is just as demonstrably wrong in the latter. And then another man, we shall suppose, holds that doctrine stoutly, and, inferring from certain religious experiences he has, or has had, that he is one of God's elect, he concludes that no great harm can come of it, however much he may relax his vigilance and effort. Need I say that this man is equally in the wrong—more perilously so than the first? The very evidences of his regeneration and conversion, from which alone he could infer his election, begin now to disappear, and still he continues to trust in his election!—as if the man, who built his house upon the sand, were to congratulate himself, even while the frail support was perishing before his eyes in the combined assault of the rain and the floods and the winds, that all was yet secure, because, forsooth, the earth's deep, hidden foundations stand all the while unshaken. Never

let us forget, brethren, that 'the firm foundation of God' bears two seals. One is: 'The Lord knoweth them that are His.' The other is: 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'[1]

To this general exhortation to '*stand fast*' is added an explanatory direction as to how that is to be done: '*and hold*'—in the firm grasp of your faith[2]—'*the traditions*'—the things delivered[3] to you, the instructions—'*which ye have been taught, whether by our word or epistle*'[4]—whether orally, during our personal intercourse with you, or in the letter which you have since received from us. An unwavering adherence to apostolic teaching is at once the great manifestation, and an essential condition, of Christian stability. And blessed be God, that the apostolic writings, as we have them in our hands, are just as trustworthy, and as binding on the faith and consciences of men, as ever the apostolic discourses were, whether pronounced by Peter on the day of Pentecost, or by Paul from Mars' Hill.

But since man's best efforts, whether in teaching, or learning, or walking in, the ways of God, are of little avail without God's abiding blessing, therefore does the Apostle, after all his direct, earnest dealing with his brethren, lift his heart to the throne of grace in another of those solemn and comprehensive prayers, for which

[1] 2 Tim. 2 : 19. [2] κρατεῖτε. [3] παραδόσεις.
[4] Literally, *by word or by epistle of us.*

these Epistles are distinguished. 'Here again,' says one of the oldest commentators, 'prayer follows exhortation: for this is to give real help. . . . I, to be sure, have spoken thus, says he; but the whole is of God, to establish and confirm.'[1]

This contrast between the human and the Divine is even more observable in the original, where we find also a recurrence of certain peculiarities of form and construction, which I have already had occasion to explain.[2] The prayer, like that at the end of the third chapter of the First Epistle, is addressed to Christ and to God, thus affording the most conclusive proof that, to the faith and heart of the writer, Christ Himself is Divine. At the same time, by again connecting the two names with verbs in the singular, he again reminds us of the ineffable oneness of the Father and the Son. The only variation in the present case is in mentioning the Saviour first, for the sake probably of giving the greater confirmation to the truths just mentioned.[3] As in the former instance, the structure of the Greek sentence might be represented somewhat more exactly thus:

[1] Chrysostom: *πάλιν εὐχὴ μετὰ παραίνεσιν· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν ὄντως βοηθεῖν. . . . ἐγὼ μέν τοι οὕτως εἶπόν, φησι· τὸ δὲ πᾶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστι, στηρίξαι, βεβαιῶσαι, κτλ.*

[2] 1 Thess. 3:11 (p. 191–6).

[3] Alford thinks that 'our Lord Jesus Christ is placed first, not merely because He is the mediator between men and God (Lün.), but because the sentence is a climax.' In this, however, he slightly misapprehends Lünemann's opinion, which is really the same as his own. And to that it may be objected, that it implies the existence of an anticlimax in the ordinary arrangement, as at 1 Thess. 3:11.

'*But may our Lord Jesus Christ and our God and Father, who loved us, and gave us everlasting consolation and good hope, through grace, Himself comfort your hearts,*' &c.

In times of need we naturally apply for succour first of all to those in whose love for us we confide, and who have already shown their love by actings and sacrifices in our behalf. When Paul himself considered the past and present deliverances, which God had wrought and was still working for him, the reflection gave him great confidence in the anticipation of future trials. He could then say: 'in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.'[1] And on the same principle it is, that he here recounts the love and past kindness of the Father and the Son to all believers, as a sure ground for the expectation of further favours, and a strong motive to his own present intercession for the believers of Thessalonica.

'*Who loved us.*'[2] This is sometimes restricted[3] to God the Father, and to His act of sending the Son to save us. I prefer to understand it of the eternal love—the love 'from the beginning'—of both the Father and the Son.[4] And then the latter half of the verse refers to the manifestation and effects of that love in time: '*and gave us*'—in the finished redemption of the cross, in the forgiveness of sin, in the presence of the Com-

[1] 2 Cor. 1 : 10.

[2] ὁ ἀγαπήσας ἡμᾶς. [3] As by Lünemann.

[4] To this the singular is no objection whatever, since this very anomaly is admitted in the next verse.

forter, and in all the other provisions of the household of faith—'*everlasting consolation*'—consolation flowing from inexhaustible fountains, equal to all the exigencies of life and death, and losing itself at last in the fulness of joy. For, indeed, this consolation even now consists largely in '*hope*'—the 'hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began'[1]—a '*good hope*,' therefore; and '*good*,' not only on account of the preëminent excellence of the object of it, but also because of the impregnable basis on which it rests, and the purifying influence which it exerts in the heart and life of the Christian.

For all this, says Paul, we are already indebted to the love of our Lord Jesus Christ and of our God and Father. Nothing of it had we earned by our labour, or bought with our money. It was *given* to us—a free gift—'*through*,' or *in*,[2] *grace*,—sovereign, unmerited favour. For these last words do not directly characterize the hope itself, but the Divine manner of giving both the consolation and the hope.[3]

With perfect propriety, then, and with a joyful assurance, might the Apostle ask for those, who now shared in these gracious privileges and hopes, that God, the Father and the Son, the joint Author of them all, would '*Himself*'—since none but He, no minister, no Apostle, could do it effectually—'*Himself comfort their*

[1] Tit. 1: 2. [2] ἐν.

[3] Some (De Wette, Castalio, Estius, Lünemann) make them qualify the *loving* as well as the giving.

hearts' amidst their trials and perils of every sort, '*and establish them*,'[1] against whatever evil influences and agitations of the time, or of the coming apostasy, '*in every good word and work*'—or, according to the reading now generally adopted, *in every good work and word*—in all, however sometimes costly and difficult, or however sometimes apparently unimportant, that befits the life and conversation of the children of God.

[1] The ὑμᾶς (*you*) is omitted by most of the recent editors.

LECTURE X.

II. THESS. 3 : 1–5.—'Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith. But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you and keep *you* from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.'

THE Apostle had been praying for the Thessalonians. He now again, as at the close of the First Epistle, asks their prayers in return. '*Finally, brethren*—after all these instructions, and exhortations, and intercessions of ours on your behalf, think not that we consider ourselves independent of your sympathy and aid; and, since you can in no other way be so helpful to us—*brethren, pray for us.*'

These faithful ministers of Christ, however, had no interests of their own apart from the gospel. To pray for them was to pray for the gospel—for its spread and triumph in the world. In obeying, therefore, this apos-

tolic precept, the great motive and aim of the church should be, '*that the word of the Lord may have* free *course*'—or, as you find it in the margin, *may run*[1]—'*and be glorified.*'

The hindrances and impediments were numerous and formidable, in the enmity of our fallen and depraved nature—in the special malignity of unbelieving Israel—and in the jealous opposition of the Roman power. Against all these strong currents '*the word of the Lord*' was now making headway. They could not, combined, arrest its progress, any more than they could quench 'the light of the morning, when the sun riseth.'[2] But that which Paul longed to see, and for which he desired his brethren to strive together in prayer, was a rapidity in its propagation, that should also resemble that of the day-beam, as it flashes from height to height, and pours itself into the deep, dark places of the earth;—that it '*may run*'—not creep, and halt, and stumble, nor yet advance merely at a slow pace, however steady and irresistible; but, as God's swift-footed messenger, or like 'a strong man rejoicing to run a race,'[3] traverse speedily all hills and valleys, all lands and seas, on its heavenly errand—'*and be glorified*'—glorified as 'the power of God unto salvation,'[4] in the subjection of the human understanding, and heart, and will, to its authority, and in the holy life, and service, and joy of them that obey the truth.

[1] τρέχῃ.
[2] 2 Sam. 23 : 4.
[3] Ps. 19 : 5.
[4] Rom. 1 : 16.

'*As* it is *also*[1] *with you*,' Paul courteously adds; and he would so assure them, that neither the doctrinal mistake which he had already corrected, nor the practical disorder into which some of them had fallen, and which likewise he was about to reprove, had shaken his confidence in the church, or caused him to forget the bright evidences she had given, and was still giving, of her faith and love.

Now, it is true that the success of the gospel in our world does not depend on any arm of flesh, or on the eloquence and zeal of the mightiest preachers. Paul himself, at a later day, when suffering bonds for Christ, perceived that 'the word of God was not bound;' nay, that his own seclusion from active labour 'fell out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.'[2] Such a result, however, was not to be presumptuously reckoned on. He knew that 'a dispensation of the gospel was committed' to him. Fully to execute that trust was the delight and glory of his life. 'Yea, woe is unto me,' he cries, 'if,' to the uttermost extent of my ability and opportunities, 'I preach not the gospel.'[3] It was not, therefore, from any cowardly fear of personal suffering, and as little was it from an overweening conceit of his personal importance, but still solely from the love he bore to the cause of Christ and His Church, that in the second verse he renews the request, that he and his companions might be remembered in the prayers of the

[1] *καθὼς καί*. [2] Phil. 1 : 12; 2 Tim. 2 : 9. [3] 1 Cor. 9 : 16, 17.

Thessalonians: '*and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.*'

The word rendered *unreasonable* properly means *without place, out of place, deranged;* and, as here used, it suggests the idea of men without, so to speak, a local habitation—having, in regard to the things of God, the sphere of the Spirit, similar relations of irreconcilable alienation and homelessness, to those which the Apostles found to be their own in regard to this present world, when they said of it: we 'have no certain dwelling-place.'[1] But in the case before us this lack of position—or, if we take the secondary meaning, this absurdity, perversity, unreasonableness—was something more than a misfortune and a calamity. It was associated with moral corruption. These *absurd* men were '*wicked men.*' They exemplified the sad description of the royal Preacher: 'Yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.'[2]

You will at the same time observe, that both their absurdity and their wickedness are here accounted for from the fact, that they were unbelievers: '*for*,' says Paul, '*all men have not faith*'—*not all have faith, the faith*,[3] the faith of the gospel, the faith of God's elect.

So far, then, from there being any ground for exalting reason against faith, it is only faith that can either restore the dislocation, or rectify the depravity, of our fallen nature. What more unreasonable—what more

[1] 1 Cor. 4: 11. [2] Eccl. 9: 3. [3] *οὐ γὰρ πάντων ἡ πίστις.*

wicked—than for a creature like man, endowed as he is, and circumstanced as he is, to prefer the things that are seen and temporal to the eternal realities which are not seen—the pleasures of sin to the fellowship of the Father and the Son—this world and the fashion of it to the unfading glories of the Kingdom of God? Surely of all worldly men it must be said: 'This their way is their folly.'[1] And, dear hearers, this very folly, this criminal folly, is chargeable on every unrenewed soul. Every such soul, be its natural powers and educational advantages what they may, 'calls evil good, and good evil; puts darkness for light, and light for darkness; puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.'[2] It goes wandering in pathless wildernesses—stumbling on the dark mountains—until 'in a time accepted'[3] faith shines around, takes the bewildered sinner by the hand, 'anoints his eyes with eye-salve, that he may see,'[4] and, pointing him to the City of God, says: 'This is the way; walk in it.'[5]

Now to this faith, says Paul, all men do not attain. '*Not all have faith*'—not even all who profess it. Of our Lord's own brethren it is recorded, that 'neither did they believe in Him;'[6] and to His disciples also He once said: 'There are some of you that believe not.'[7] And do I not now address some, who are just as blind as they to the glory of the Saviour? Like 'the men which journeyed with' Saul of Tarsus, when 'the Lord

[1] Ps. 49 : 13. [2] Is. 5 : 20. [3] 2 Cor. 6 : 2. [4] Rev. 3 : 18.
[5] Is. 30 : 21. [6] John 7 : 5. [7] John 6 : 64.

Jesus appeared unto him in the way,' you too 'hear a voice, but see no man.'[1] And so it is everywhere—in every congregation probably throughout the land to-day: '*not all have faith.*' The strange, mournful fact is stated in general terms; not so much as something that had just transpired in the particular city or region where the Apostle was now labouring, but rather as something that holds good, as with the force and regularity of a law, wherever the gospel is preached. As if it had been said: 'Whatever rapid and glorious success may, in answer to your prayers, attend the word of the Lord, ministered by us, we still lay our account with having many adversaries. As well from the warnings of our Lord Himself, and the intimations of His Spirit, as from our uniform, painful experience, we know that it is not a universal acceptance that is to be looked for.'[2] It has even been thought that the expression was intended to convey more than that. '*Not all,*' says Bengel; 'he really means *few*. The Thessalonians, who had promptly believed, might easily suppose that *all* would be equally prompt. This Paul denies, his experience being wholly against it.'[3]

The fact, then, that '*not all had faith,*' even where Paul preached the gospel, is mentioned without explanation,[4] but as itself furnishing sufficient explanation

[1] Acts 9 : 7, 17. [2] 1 Cor. 16 : 9; Acts 9 : 16; 20 : 23; 21 : 11.

[3] '*Non omnium*, ταπείνωσις, i. e. paucorum. Thessalonicences, qui promte crediderant, facile putare possent, *omnes* ita promtos fore. id negat Paulus, alia omnia expertus.'

[4] Whether on the ground of the absence of a Divine election, and

of the danger to which he was exposed from '*perverse and wicked men*.' No man can reject the Divine testimony concerning Christ, when fairly and fully presented to him, without thereby inflicting immediate and serious damage on his whole inward life—without, in fact, becoming, whatever appearances there may be to the contrary, a worse man, as well as a guiltier man, than he was before. Fearfully was this principle illustrated, and on a large scale, among the Jews of that age. Everywhere—and, in particular, at Corinth, where Paul was now writing this Epistle—the most active and bitter and persevering opposition that he encountered was from the synagogue. And it is commonly supposed, therefore, that the reference in the text is mainly to his enemies of this class; as when he besought the brethren at Rome, 'for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that they would strive together with him in their prayers to God for him; that he might be delivered from them that did not believe in Judea.'[1] Calvin, indeed, would include the false professors of Christ, who seem to have hated, as cordially even as did the Jews, one 'set' as Paul was 'for the defense of the gospel.'[2]

But, whoever were the parties in question, he asks

the withholding of Divine grace (Calvin, Vatablus, Estius, Piscator) &c.), or of the want, on the part of the non-believers themselves, of suitable dispositions for believing (Corn. a Lapide, Grotius, De Wette, Bloomfield, Lünemann, Alford, &c.). I find no trace of either view in the text.

[1] Rom. 15: 30, 31. [2] Phil. 1: 17.

the prayers of his brethren, that he might '*be delivered from*' them—that his evangelical labours might not be interrupted, nor his career cut prematurely short.

And here let us again remark, before we proceed, the real importance, in Paul's estimation, of prayer—the Church's united prayers—for the gospel and its ministers. To this power with God did the Lord in a measure commit the supply of labourers for His harvest.[1] And from our Apostle's habit of earnest entreaty in this regard[2] we may infer, that, after the labourers have entered the field, the continued exercise of that same power is not less needful for their encouragement and success.

At the third verse the writer, dismissing farther concern about his own personal trials and dangers, turns once more to cheer and strengthen his brethren.

'*Not all have faith*,' he had just said; and now, in marked contrast to that,[3] he exclaims: '*But faithful is the Lord*'[4]—faithful to His purpose, to His promise, to every hope that rests on His promise. The very same connection of thought occurs in Rom. 3 : 3 : 'What if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?' and in 2 Tim. 2 : 13 : 'I

[1] Matt. 9 : 38.

[2] See 2 Cor. 1 : 10, 11; Eph. 6 : 19, 20; Col. 4 : 3, 4; 1 Thess. 5 : 25; Heb. 13 : 18, 19.

[3] To a careful observer, however, of Paul's habits of verbal association, this is no proof that '*faith*' in v. 2 is equivalent to *faithfulness*, as many have explained it.

[4] πιστὸς δέ ἐστιν ὁ Κύριος.

we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself.'

'*Who shall establish you*,' it is then added,—in the midst of all your own weakness, and against all hostile influences from without,—'*and keep* you *from evil*.' This might be rendered, *from the wicked one*,[1] the father and ruler of all the wicked—whose children and slaves are spoken of in the preceding verse. And in this sense is the word understood by very many. But perhaps it is better, with our Translators, to take it as embracing all that is evil, and so as really a negative equivalent of the corresponding clause at the end of the second chapter: 'and establish you in every good work and word;'[2] with possibly, indeed, a special reference to the great current of evil, which had already begun to flow, and which in that chapter had been traced onward to its fatal issue.

But when Paul spoke in this absolute way of God's future dealings with the Thessalonians, did he mean to give that church, and every member of it, a positive pledge of infallible preservation? Assuredly not. As I have more than once had occasion to point out,[3] he addresses his brethren on the ground of their profession, and what he does unqualifiedly assert is God's faithfulness to His part in the covenant. But neither here, nor anywhere else, is there any promise to hypocrisy and unbelief, or to negligence and apostasy, but only to

[1] ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ. [2] So Lünemann. [3] See pages 59, 280.

faith and perseverance, though these too are the gifts and results of grace.

All this is implied in what immediately follows. 'Not only do we rely on the faithfulness of the Lord; *but*[1] *we have confidence* also—a gracious confidence, as still resting ultimately for its justification *in the Lord* Himself—*touching you, that the things which we command you*—in what we have said, and are about to say before concluding—*ye both do and will do*. For, of course, you cannot expect the promised confirmation and security apart from your own obedience and patient continuance in well-doing, but only in and through that.'

And then, since such doing is neither possible nor of much value, except as the fruit of divinely wrought affections, no sooner has the Apostle thus expressed his confidence in his brethren, than he falls again on his knees in their behalf, beseeching God for that grace, which alone could enable them to fulfil his highest hopes regarding them. '*But*[1] *may the Lord*'—the Lord Jesus, the source of all saving wisdom and strength and guidance to the Church—'*direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*' These two things, as if he had said, are all that is needed, to ensure a cheerful and unwearied performance of all Christian duty. They were the sufficient evidences of your regeneration at the first, when 'ye turned to God from the idols, to serve the living and true God, and to

[1] δέ.

wait for His Son from the heavens.'[1] They are sufficient still for all the uses of your sanctification and consolation.

By '*the love of God*,' into which Paul prayed the Lord to direct the hearts of the Thessalonians, he no doubt intended, not the love that God bears to His children, but their filial love to God ;—that true elixir of life, the presence of which in the soul at once turns all things into blessings ; 'all things working together for good to them that love God.'[2]

The other phrase, however, '*and the patient waiting for Christ*,' does not convey the thought of the original. There what we call '*patient waiting*' is just one word[3] —a word that is found more than thirty times in the New Testament, and in every instance, with only two other exceptions (and those not exceptions as to the sense[4]), is rendered, as you will find it is here also in the margin, simply *patience*. Substitute, then, this idea for the other, and the prayer is : '*May the Lord direct your hearts . . . into the patience of Christ*—the patience characteristic of Christ, and of those in whom is the mind of Christ. Your sufferings are the sufferings of Christ, and you need the patience of Christ to bear them.'

It is true, indeed, that the patience of Christ and His people is no mere passive, stolid endurance, but a waiting, expectant thing. In both it is the 'patience of

[1] 1 Thess. 1 : 10. [2] Rom. 8 : 28. [3] *ὑπομονή*.
[4] Rom. 2 : 7, *patient continuance;* 2 Cor. 1 : 6, *enduring*.

hope'[1]—hope of the coming kingdom. And therefore does the aged Apostle John, in his address to the seven churches, beautifully style himself their 'brother, and companion in the tribulation, and kingdom,[2] and patience of Jesus Christ.'

'*Into the love of God*,' therefore, '*and into the patience of Christ*,' the writer prays the Lord to '*direct the hearts*' of his brethren. And to whom could such a prayer be so fitly addressed as to the loving, patient Saviour, who, knowing well our weaknesses and waywardness and temptations, has received from the Father the plenitude of the Spirit, whereby He is able to change us also into His own likeness?

Beloved hearers, are there any of you, whose hearts have not yet been directed into this path of life? You love many things; but you do not love God. You bear, it may be with some measure of cheerful equanimity, the various losses and crosses of life; but your patience, such as it is, is not 'the patience of Christ.' You know that you are not 'suffering with Him;' and you have no hope, no thought, of being 'glorified together.'[3] And yet to you likewise this same Christ is offered as your Saviour. Will you still trifle with that offer? Beware—lest it be silently, but for ever, withdrawn. Oh, that 'the word of the Lord' might even now 'run and be glorified' in your salva-

[1] 1 Thess. 1 : 3; Heb. 12 : 1, 2.
[2] So according to the now received reading. [3] Rom. 8 : 17.

tion ! Venture forth, I beseech you by the love of God, and by the patience of Christ, and by all that is awful, and all that is desirable, in eternity—venture forth no longer alone, without chart or compass, on these perilous seas. Do your own hearts never fail you there ? And whither then do you look for deliverance ? Dear friends, look to Jesus. See Him walking on the sea ;—He draws nigh unto you. Be not afraid. But, like the poor disciples on the storm-tossed waters of Galilee, willingly receive Him into the ship. Yea, give Him the helm. Let Him henceforward direct your course, and then all is well. Soon—very soon—the darkness itself will be past, and, when the calm light of the eternal morn dawns, you will be resting secure in your desired haven.

LECTURE XI.

II. THESS. 3: 6–18.—'Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you: neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother. Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord *be* with you all. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.'

THE writer has reserved for the close of the Epistle his severest word of official rebuke; which, however, is directed, not against the church as a whole, but against certain of her members. Having in the fourth verse declared his confidence in the Lord touching the Thes-

salonians, that the things which he commanded they both did and would do, he now puts their obedience to the test in a matter of immediate practical interest.

It will help to give order and distinctness to our examination of verses 6–15, if we consider, first, what may be gathered from them as to the nature of the offense; —secondly, the Apostle's views regarding it, as these were illustrated by his example;—and, lastly, his instructions to the church respecting the manner in which the offenders should be dealt with.

I. First, the nature of the offense.—This we learn in general from the 6th and 11th verses: '*every brother walking disorderly, and not according to the tradition,*' or *instruction,* '*which he received from us.*[1] . . . *For we hear*'—from Timothy; or, through the frequent communications between Thessalonica and Corinth, *we are hearing* from time to time—'*of some walking*[2] *among you disorderly*'—breaking the ranks (as a kindred expression was formerly explained[3]), and turning, so far as their influence extends, the goodly order of the household of faith, as that had been established by apostolic authority, into the excitement and confusion of a mob.

The particular shape which the evil had assumed appears also from verse 11: '*working not at all, but being*

[1] ἀτάκτως περιπατοῦντος, καὶ μὴ κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν (as in ch. 2 : 15), ἣν παρέλαβε (this is now commonly read in the plural, παρέλαβον, or παρελάβοσαν, *they received.* Lachmann has παρελάβοτε, *ye received*) παρ' ἡμῶν.

[2] ἀκούομεν γάρ τινας περιπατοῦντας. [3] See p. 327.

busy-bodies.' There is here in the original[1] a sort of word-play, that cannot well be rendered into English. It has been imitated thus: '*doing nothing, but over-doing;* not busy in work, but busy-bodies.'[2]

The case seems plainly to have been the same, though probably in an aggravated form, as that which the Apostle had striven in the First Epistle to correct, when he exhorted the brethren to 'admonish the disorderly,' and that they should 'study to be quiet, and to do their own business, and to work with their own hands.'[3] The majority of these converts, it may be presumed, were dependent for their livelihood on their manual labour. But under the influence of certain peculiarities, to which I formerly adverted,[4] in their feelings and position, and to which were now added the new mistakes and commotions that had arisen in relation to the Lord's coming, some of them had laid aside their tools, and, forsaking their fields and shops, were to be seen everywhere but there, '*working not at all,*' but very much occupied in matters that did not belong to them[5]—in playing the bishop in other men's dioceses[6]—to the interruption and annoyance of their neighbours, and the great discredit of their own profession; like those

[1] *μηδὲν ἐργαζομένους, ἀλλὰ περιεργαζομένους.* With this it is common to compare the *non agere, sed satagere* of ancient criticism.

[2] Robinson. [3] 1 Thess. 4 : 11; 5 : 14. [4] See page 239.

[5] The *περί* in *περιεργαζομένους* may be taken either as local: 'Workers round about (as the word signifieth), that do nothing but fetch frisks and vagaries through the world' (Leigh, *Critica Sacra*), or as intensive.

[6] 1 Pet. 4 : 15 (*ἢ ὡς ἀλλοτριοεπίσκοπος*).

'younger widows' so graphically described in the First Epistle to Timothy (5 : 13) as 'learning to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busy-bodies.'[1] Meanwhile, such labour not being of the productive sort, those who, with no other source of income, exercised themselves in it, necessarily fell burdens on the charity of their brethren; and so the abounding grace of the church became itself an additional snare.

II. In the second place, as regards Paul's opinion of such conduct, that ought to have been sufficiently understood from his own example, of which he here again reminds his brethren. Verses 7–9 might be read as follows: '*For ye yourselves know how ye ought to imitate*[2] *us; for we were not disorderly*[3] *among you, nor did we eat bread for nought from any one, but in toil and weariness, working night and day*'[4]—or, *but working in toil and weariness night and day*[5]—'*that we might not burden any one*[6] *of you; not because we have not authority*'[7]—to claim our support, he means, from the churches—'*but that we might give ourselves for a pattern*[8] *unto you, to imitate us.*'

Without repeating the remarks that were suggested

[1] There is perhaps a paronomasia here also: *οὐ μόνον δὲ ἀργαί, ἀλλὰ καὶ . . . περίεργοι.*

[2] *μιμεῖσθαι.* And so at v. 9. [3] *ἠτακτήσαμεν.*

[4] *οὐδὲ δωρεὰν ἄρτον ἐφάγομεν παρά τινος, ἀλλ' ἐν κόπῳ καὶ μόχθῳ νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν ἐργαζόμενοι.*

[5] So Lünemann, Alford, and many others. The other construction is adopted by Winer, De Wette, Conybeare, &c.

[6] As in 1 Thess. 2 : 9. [7] *ἐξουσίαν.*

[8] *ἵνα ἑαυτοὺς τύπον δῶμεν.*

by the previous reference to the same topic,[1] I think it evident that Paul's chief reason for practising this gratuitous self-denial at Thessalonica was, that what he saw even then of the enthusiastic fervour, and eager longing of the converts there for the coming kingdom of God, led him to apprehend just such extravagances of opinion and action, as soon afterwards showed themselves in that communion. He was careful, therefore, to leave them in no doubt as to what he wished them to infer from seeing him day after day alternate the lofty, strenuous ministrations of the Apostle with the silent, hard toil of the artisan. '*For even*,' it is added in the 10th verse, or rather *for also*,[2] not only by our example did we inculcate the rule of a diligent application to your secular callings for your own support, but by express precept also—'*for also, when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any one will not work, neither let him eat.*'[3]

This is said to have been a Jewish proverb, and it certainly appeals to the common sense of all parties. On the one hand, since working and eating go together, and working is in order to eating, the man who makes up his mind not to work might reasonably be expected to give up eating likewise. And, on the other hand, his industrious brethren could not with any decency be required to support him in his voluntary idleness. Nay, they were positively forbidden to do it, since that would be to countenance and encourage him in his delinquency.

[1] See pages 108–14. [2] καὶ γάρ. [3] τις οὐ θέλει . . . ἐσθιέτω.

When God made man, He 'put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.'[1] And so labour may well be said to have been 'Heaven's first law;' though, like every thing else in man's lot, when man fell, this too passed under the curse: 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.'[2] Nor to this day has the race escaped from the pressure of that solemn sentence. All that we so often hear from infidel lips about the dignity of labour, and about work being worship, cannot hide from us the humbling fact, that much discomfort and weariness, much that is both sordid and irksome, still clings to 'all the labour which man taketh under the sun.'[3] From this general debasement we are lifted up only by 'the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.'[4] It is, indeed, the will of God now, as it was in the beginning, that every man have something to do,[5] and do it. That law is not repealed in the Church, but ratified and blessed. Assuredly there is a dignity in labour, whether of the study, or the field, or the workshop, when, enlightened by the truth, cheered by the grace, and trusting in the strength and promises, of God, we go at it as the task assigned us by Him, in the

[1] Gen. 2: 15. [2] Gen. 3: 17–19. [3] Eccl. 1: 3. [4] Rom. 3: 24.

[5] Calvin: 'Scimus ad hoc creatum esse hominem, ut aliquid agat': 'We know that for this end was man created, that he should do something.'

faithful performance of which, not only our daily bread and present comfort, but our future happiness also, and the welfare of society, and the honour of the gospel, and the glory of our Lord and Saviour, are all alike concerned. On the contrary, every evasion, on whatever pretext, of that Divine appointment, however humble in itself, can lead only to embarrassment and shame.

The Apostle, therefore, in the 12th verse, again renews, as for the last time, and with great earnestness and urgency, his authoritative precept on this subject. '*Now such*'[1]—these disorderly brethren, these idle, unprofitable busy-bodies—'*we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that, working*[2] *with quietness, they eat their own bread,*' and not other people's—not that which their brethren have earned for themselves by honest toil, nor that which the same toil enables them to spare for the Lord's cause and for the Lord's poor—the widow and the orphan, the aged and the infirm. That all may enjoy this honourable independence, and all attain to the superior blessedness of giving, 'let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called,'[3] and there let him '*work*'—'whatsoever his hand findeth to do, doing it with his might.'[4] And in order to this it will be necessary that he 'work *with quietness*'—causing no disturbance to his neighbours, and dismissing from his own mind all groundless and distracting agitations. This, says Paul, '*we command and exhort by our Lord*

[1] τοῖς δὲ τοιούτοις. [2] ἐργαζόμενοι. [3] 1 Cor. 7 : 20. [4] Eccl. 9 : 10.

Jesus Christ,' as the only course of conduct by which you can please Him, and secure for yourselves at His coming the reward of the good and faithful servant.[1]

III. This same duty, however, had been so often inculcated on former occasions, and all the while with so little effect, matters apparently having still gone on from bad to worse, that the Apostle now felt it was high time to invoke the coöperation of the church itself in abating so great a scandal. And this was the third point we proposed to look at—the instructions here given to the church respecting the mode of dealing with these offenders.

Of course, one most important and effective provision had been made against cases of this kind in the original rule which we have already considered, and which the writer quotes only to reaffirm it, to wit, that the brethren should not charge themselves with the support of any who refused to work. Now, however, from the 6th verse it appears that something equally marked and decided is required of them in their general relations to the parties in question. '*Now we command you, brethren*'—or, if the introductory word[2] be translated, as it very often is, *but*, there may be an allusion to the preceding verse, where Paul had prayed the Lord to 'direct their hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.' He would then be understood as saying: '*But*'—so far is it from being true,

[1] Compare pages 239–41. [2] δέ.

that these gracious affections require any complicity with sin, or are incompatible with the maintenance of proper discipline—'*we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*'—that is, by His authority —'*that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother walking disorderly.*'

This must not be understood to mean, that he was forthwith to be excommunicated, without any further attempt to reclaim him from his error. The injunction is, not to expel him, but to withdraw themselves from him. The Apostle's expression [1] is a peculiar one, and in the New Testament is only found once again, at 2 Cor. 8 : 20 : '*avoiding* this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us.' Elsewhere it is used of *taking in* sail, and then generally of *shortening, contracting, shrinking*. The Thessalonians, you perceive, were, so to speak, to draw in from him. They must shun unnecessary intercourse, and, even when duty compelled them to be in his company, must withhold from him the old frank, cordial greetings, and, by the mere reserve of their bearing toward him, seek to make him feel how deeply he was grieving the hearts of his brethren, and sinning against their common Lord.

Judging from the past, however, it was only too probable that the present letter might produce no greater effect than the former had done on the conscience and life of these transgressors. Anticipating

[1] στέλλεσθαι. A compound of this is employed in Gal. 2 : 12 and Heb. 10 : 38.

this, the writer, in the 14th verse, seems to prescribe still severer measures—even to excommunication, as Calvin thinks: '*But if any one*[1] *obey not our word by the*[2] *epistle*' which we have just written to you, and which he will soon hear read, '*note that* man'—put a mark on him—let him be as a leper afar off in the eyes of his brethren;[3]—'*and have no company with him*'—literally, *be not mixed up with him;*[4] give him and all others clearly to understand, by unmistakable action on your part, that you have no sympathy whatever with him in his misconduct, and that you refuse to bear the least responsibility for it,—'*that he may be shamed.*' For, of course, neither my object nor yours is the man's destruction, but his recovery and salvation. Even for that, however, it is needful '*that he be shamed*'—brought to a humbling sense of his sin and folly, and a godly sorrow for the same.

[1] *εἰ δέ τις.* [2] *τῆς.*

[3] The marginal construction, *signify that man by an epistle*, is found in many of the older commentaries (Erasmus, Calvin, &c.) and English versions, and has been adopted by several moderns (including even Winer). But the objections to it are decisive:—1. The presence of the Greek article would thus imply, that Paul expected such a letter; and of this we have no hint whatever. 2. The natural arrangement would have been, *ταῦτον διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς σημειοῦσθε.* 3. The Apostle nowhere else requires beforehand, that cases of individual discipline should be referred to himself. 4. And lastly, in the case supposed, he distinctly prescribes the mode of dealing with it. As little can Bengel's interpretation: 'Brand him with your censure, using this epistle for his admonition,' or Pelt's suggestion: 'having this epistle to trust to, treat him with the greater severity,' be grammatically justified.

[4] *μὴ συναναμίγνυσθε αὐτῷ.* This verb occurs again, and in the same sense, in 1 Cor. 5: 9, 11.

'*And*'[1] (v. 15), that this good result—the great end, so far as the offender is concerned, of all ecclesiastical discipline[2]—may not be hindered, look well to the spirit in which you carry out these directions; '*count him not as an enemy*,' nor deal with him as such—as a personal enemy of your own, or as a public enemy of Christ and His cause,—'*but admonish* him *as a brother*,' an erring brother, indeed, but still a brother; one called with the same holy calling, and bearing the same name, as yourselves. Let not your admonitions, therefore, whether by word or deed, betray any feeling either of careless indifference, or of bitter hostility. Let them be prompted and characterized throughout by that love, which not only 'suffereth long, and is kind,' but, in the case even of the worst of men, still 'hopeth all things.'[3]

You will now observe lastly that, in the midst of all this, there is inserted at the 13th verse a general word of exhortation and warning to the church at large: '*But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing*.' Chrysostom explains this as equivalent to saying: 'After all, you must not allow yourselves to be so far alienated from these men, however unworthy, as to stand by, and see them perish with hunger.' But this, it is evident, introduces a thought by no means in harmony with the spirit or letter of the context. It is much better, with the majority of interpreters, to understand the verse

[1] καὶ. [2] See 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; 1 Tim. 1:20.
[3] 1 Cor. 13:4, 7.

thus: 'Let not the fact, that your charity has been so long abused by these men, discourage altogether the practice of beneficence to other and more deserving objects.' Even this, however, would come in somewhat abruptly. And therefore I prefer the view of some,[1] which regards the Apostle, after the solemn command and exhortation in the 12th verse to the idlers, as immediately turning round again to the sound portion of the church, and seeking first, before proceeding with his disciplinary instructions, to confirm them in their more consistent course. '*But ye, brethren*, whatever others may do, and great as are your discouragements within the church, as well as from without, be not weary in doing what is right. Unaffected by these examples of a restless fanaticism and ignoble indolence, do still as you have done hitherto. Lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.[2] And, in particular, see to it that nothing in your own opinions or sentiments be suffered to interrupt the diligent prosecution of your lawful callings.'

Before leaving these verses, I would have you particularly notice these two things :—

1. First, what a practical, reasonable, orderly thing Christianity is! It would have every man at work—at work of some kind—and every man at his own work.

Those whom the Apostle here censures erred, not merely in neglecting the work that was incumbent on

[1] Lünemann, Alford, &c. [2] 1 Tim. 2 : 2.

them, but also in being intrusively active about things with which they had nothing to do. And the principle is one of universal application. We have all our several posts assigned us in society and in the Church, and the Lord of all ordains that each individual keep himself to his proper station, and faithfully discharge the duties belonging to that, without encroaching on the sphere of his neighbour. He may think that he could much better discharge that neighbour's duties than he; but the opinion will not justify his interference. 'Every man shall bear his own burden.'[1] The various members of the body are, indeed, to feel their need one of another, and to be mutually helpful; but this they can be only so long as each attends to its own specific work. If, for example, every private Christian will thrust himself into the functions of the elder or the deacon, or the elders and deacons try to supersede one another, or set up as the rivals of him who is appointed to labour also in the word and doctrine, or the minister in his turn begins to arrogate to himself whatever of right and privilege belongs to the other officers and to the brotherhood at large, no pretence of superior faithfulness and zeal, such as is commonly employed to cloak these several usurpations, will avail for their excuse, or will save the church from the inevitable consequences of a disorderly walk. And the same thing holds true in all the other relations that we sustain in life.

[1] Gal. 6 : 5.

2. Secondly, what a blessing for the world resides in those magnanimous words of the 12th verse: 'We command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that, working with quietness, they eat their own bread'—*their own bread!* Who can tell how often that one single, noble phrase has quickened the pulse, and nerved the arm, of honest industry? I verily believe it has done more for the poor of Christendom, in Protestant countries at least, than all the devices of philanthropy and all the provisions of law. He who uttered it was Christ's great Apostle, the man who saw 'visions and revelations of the Lord.'[1] But even he suffered no degradation, and felt none, when, coming back from the third heaven and from Paradise, he resumed from time to time, as the interests of the gospel might require, his old work of tent-making. The example, like the precept which it was intended to enforce, is still a power in the minds of men. The two together have doubtless done much to form that wholesome public opinion, which classes with the meanest of his kind him who consents to eat the bread of dependence, when by using his own hands he might 'eat *his own bread.*'

There is, however, an application of this principle also to church affairs, that does not always receive the attention it deserves. There are not a few, I fear, whose pride would recoil from begging for themselves and their children the bread that perisheth, who yet have

[1] 2 Cor. 12: 1.

no such scruple about shifting off upon others the burden—as they account one of the noblest privileges that Christ has conferred on His people—of supporting and spreading His gospel in the world. Possibly it might be said with truth of some families and individuals here present, that in this respect, if in no other, they do not 'eat their own bread.' They slily take it for granted, that their brethren and neighbours will keep up the needful church accommodations and church ordinances, which they will then do *their* part by condescending to enjoy, or criticise, at their expense. To all such I would say: Dear brethren, for your own sakes I beseech you, suppress the base calculation, and rid yourselves of the paltry spirit that prompts it. Sure I am, that, just in proportion as you yield to that spirit, you not only are guilty of a manifest injustice, but you deprive yourselves of one of the highest honours and richest blessings within your reach. Thanks be to God, to pray for the peace, and seek the good of Jerusalem, is not a distinction reserved for any one class among us. And the promise also is equally sure to all: 'They shall prosper that love Thee.'[1]

At the 16th verse the writer, having now said all that apostolic wisdom and love suggested as 'profitable,' in the circumstances of the church, 'for its teaching,[2] for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,' once more at parting—nay, again and again, as

[1] Ps. 122 : 6, 9. [2] 2 Tim. 3 : 16 (*διδασκαλίαν*).

with a lingering farewell—commits his brethren and all their interests to the infinite wisdom, and love, and power of the church's Lord. The connecting particle is the same that we have so often met with in similar cases: '*Now*'—or *but*[1]—'*may the Lord of peace Himself*,' by His own mighty and effectual working in you and around you, '*give you peace always by all means*,' or *in every way*.[2]

In the dialect of Scripture the blessing of peace stands generally for all other blessings. And this comprehensive good is here appropriately sought from Him who is the '*Lord of peace*,' its owner and dispenser—that is to say, from our Lord Jesus Christ. In most other places, as in the corresponding passage of the First Epistle,[3] it is the God of peace to whom the Apostle addresses his supplications for all saints; and, indeed, to 'make peace' is one of the prerogatives that Jehovah claims for Himself.[4] But, as Christ and the Father are one, so the peace of God flows to us only through the person and mediation of the Son. Nor could there be a more convincing proof, that to the mind and heart of Paul the Redeemer Himself is a Divine Person, than that such a prayer as this should be presented to Him.

For you will, moreover, mark the absoluteness of its terms. '*May the Lord of peace Himself give you*'—in

[1] Compare 1 Thess. 3 : 11; 5 : 23; 2 Thess. 2 : 16; 3 : 5.

[2] ἐν παντὶ τρόπῳ—as in ch. 2 : 3.

[3] 1 Thess. 5 : 23. Compare Rom. 15 : 33; 16 : 20; 2 Cor. 13 : 11; Phil. 4 : 9; Heb. 13 : 20.

[4] Is. 45 : 7.

the exercise of His free, sovereign authority and love—'*peace always in every way*'—peace of every kind, in all your relations, and by a concurrence of all the powers and influences of providence and grace;—the peace of reconciliation with God—peace, one with another—peace in the midst of this life's necessary sorrows, and the assaults of the Tempter—peace in the prospect, and in the article, of death—eternal peace—His own peace. Surely, brethren, it were the extreme of mingled impiety and absurdity, to address such a petition to any other Saviour than one whose resources are infinite.

It is then added, as in the same breath: '*The Lord* be *with you all;*'—'*with you,*' in the mighty energy of His truth and Spirit, and in the manifestation of His own glory and beauty. And may He thus 'be with you *all,*' not excepting those who now by their unworthy walk occasion us so much anxiety; and then, whatever enemies beset you, and though we should see your faces no more, our highest and fondest wishes for your happiness will be realized—your peace will be profound and perpetual.

The Apostle, it appears, was in the habit of employing an amanuensis to write his Epistles from his dictation. Warned, however, by what had just occurred at Thessalonica (ch. 2 : 2), he announces his determination in future to authenticate every such document—or perhaps he means every document of the kind, about which there might otherwise be a doubt—by attaching to it his

Christian and official salutation with his own hand. This rule is here exemplified in the last two verses: '*The salutation by the hand of me Paul;*[1] *which*'—that is, which autographic way of giving the salutation—'*is the token*,' or *a sign*,[2] '*in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*'[3] Nothing, therefore, it is evident, would be gained by the deniers of the Saviour's Divinity by excluding Him from the 16th verse. All the good, that an Apostle can desire for a church or any of its members, is comprehended in '*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*'—the favour of the Anointed God-Man.

May that favour, brethren, be yours, now and forever. Amen.

[1] τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ Παύλου. Logically Παύλου stands in apposition to ἐμοῦ implied in ἐμῇ. Compare 1 Cor. 16: 21; Col. 4: 18.

[2] σημεῖον.

[3] This ἀμήν is less generally omitted by the critics than that at the end of the First Epistle.—As regards the subscription: '*The second to the Thessalonians was written from Athens*,' see page 407.